Mystery · Detective · Western · Adventure

MYSTERY STORIES

March
1928

25c

The Samurai Fan
Raymond Scudder

Rummy
by Carl Cla

Professor Maurice Scholder

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Raising it, unopened, above his head, he described a circle in the air.

The Samurai Fan

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By RAYMOND SCUDDER

Ralph Cort went to a gay party down in the somnolent tropics to forget his troubles and find recreation. But the sequel to that affair led him into more strange and terrifying adventures and excitement than usually fall to the lot of a normal young man.

CHAPTER I

FINGER-PRINTS

THE thing that made it particularly ugly was the fact that it had happened in *his* bungalow.

This ran through Ralph Cort's mind again and again as he hurried down the serpentine country road toward the village to announce the sudden, inexplicable death of his friend Church, the federal prohibition agent, newly appointed to that district of the Hawaiian Islands.

Kamani trees and cocoanut palms threw weird shadows across the road before the man as he ran. Each time he rounded a bend his heart leaped uncontrollably—he expected every minute to see some one, something, sneaking and cowering, ready to dart out at him.

Unquestionably it was murder. This he had already decided, though he really had no proof. Church's body, as Cort had found it upon entering the room where he had left the agent reading a few hours before, had sat erect in the chair, apparently uninjured. The only thing wrong with the man was that he had no life in him.

Arriving at the wooden gate outside the lawn of the Hawaiian postmaster and nominal sheriff, Ralph Cort stopped still for a moment with his hand on the latch. A new

complication suddenly presented itself to him. Who was to testify, in the investigation that would follow, that Cort had gone tramping alone in the hills, and had returned to find the stark, lifeless body sitting erect in the chair? The two men were known to be spending a vacation together in this little country cottage, but they were also known to be public enemies on the question of the law which Church was paid to uphold and which Cort took great pleasure in flouting. There was no other cottage within a quarter of a mile of the one the two men had been occupying during the past ten days. Until this second it had not occurred to Cort that he himself might in any way become involved in the tragedy.

A bevy of nondescript curs was announcing the man's arrival. As Cort put his hand on the gate latch, they broke loose in an angry chorus of protest against his abrupt appearance.

PAOLI, the postmaster-sheriff of Kahana, emerged through a screen door at the front of the bungalow. It was not yet completely dark, and he could see from Cort's actions that he was in great agitation. He hurried down the wooden steps and across the soft tropical grass to the gate, lantern in hand.

"Got some kind *pilikia,** Mr. Cort?" he inquired, half in English and half in Hawaiian.

"*Pilikia?* My God! Somebody's killed Church!"

In his excitement, Paoli resorted to the Chinese term so expressive of severe emotion.

"*Ei yah!*" he exclaimed, and darted back into the bungalow.

In a moment he returned with his younger brother. Each carried a lantern, and Paoli handed Cort a revolver. Thus armed and lighted, the three men hurried back to the cottage on the hill, from which Ralph Cort had emerged in a frenzy not fifteen minutes before.

It had turned completely dark on the way, and it was only by the flare of their lanterns that the cottage was illuminated as they entered it. Grotesque shadows slid across the rude walls as the men moved.

The body of Thomas Church, just as Cort had described it to the Hawaiians, sat stiffly upright in the chair, completely free of the back, leaning over a trifle forward. This posture alone made it ghastly to look upon. But what made it chiefly uncanny was the fact that between the first two fingers of the right hand, which rested against the right knee, remained the ashes of what had been, apparently, a cigaret. It was obvious that when death had come upon the man he had been smoking, and obvious as well that unconsciousness had come very rapidly.

The Hawaiians stood away from the body, their mouths slightly open and drooping, as though the sight were actually nauseating. Neither seemed to be inspired with any ideas of what to do. Finally Cort made a suggestion.

"I believe it is best for us to make as minute an observation of the body as possible."

He was thinking, as he spoke, that he was a very unfortunate man indeed to be forced into this unpleasant work which normally would not be required of a friend. He did not notice that the Hawaiians stood looking curiously at him, unable to grasp his meaning. He saw them shrink back from the body as though it were something unclean.

* Trouble.

"I say take clothes off more better," he translated.

Paoli shook his head.

"This kind too much no good," he argued. But he moved toward the body, for he realized that it would be necessary to have definite data for a report, and that failure to have it would endanger his job. He realized also that Cort was the one to lead. He decided to appear to take the initiative, but actually to follow.

He reached out and took the arm of the dead man, being careful to touch only the sleeve of the coat. But instantly he shrank back from the contact.

UNDER Cort's direction the body of his friend was removed to a bed nearby. This procedure was made doubly unpleasant since the frame of the body had contracted and stiffened, and kept its original sitting posture even after it had been laid down. Again the Hawaiians shrank back, and it fell to Cort to continue with the inspection.

But when every bit of clothing had been removed he could discover no sign of a wound. Bending closely over the face, however, he discerned a faint odor suggestive of ether. But he could not be certain that it was that drug or anything relating to it.

Suddenly Cort stood up and looked anxiously at Paoli.

"Good God!" he cried, "are you a coroner?"

The Hawaiian looked as though he were being accused of the murder. It was manifest that he had no idea of what a coroner was.

"Well," said Cort meditatively, "we've certainly made a pretty mess of all this. I guess we've managed to bungle this investigation so thoroughly that the police will never be able to find the murderer."

He thrust his hands into his pockets and paced up and down the room. He realized fully that his fingers were the only ones which had touched the flesh of the dead man, and that, unless he used force, he would never be able to get the Hawaiians' finger-prints registered as companions of his own.

He had heard of convictions on circumstantial evidence.

CHAPTER II

IN THE MANGO GROVE

THERE was not even a morgue at Kahana, let alone a coroner. The only modern equipment in the place was a long-distance telephone connected with all parts of the Island of Oahu, with its central switchboard in Honolulu.

While the two Hawaiians guarded the body of Thomas Church, from a distance they considered safe and comfortable, Cort hurried to the little country general store, kept by a Chinese farmer, where the only telephone hung.

Presently he got in touch with the Honolulu police station and asked advice and orders.

"Cort?" asked the voice over the wire. "Oh, yes, the landscape painter.... Yes, I know.... Well, now, Mr. Cort, the only thing you can do is to wait for the sheriff from Hauula. I'll phone him right away and have him come over to get you. Then you can come into Honolulu with the body on that last train. The sheriff ought to reach you in about three-quarters of an hour."

His report completed and the most intense part of the excitement being now over, Cort was suddenly overcome by the horror of his friend's death and by the realization that he himself was somewhat im-

plicated. He had been too confused to exercise that amount of investigative skill which all men, in their untroubled moments, feel they will certainly exert in times of emergency. He would simply have to explain the whole thing to the officials, tell them exactly how it had happened that his finger-prints alone were on the body, and trust to luck that they would find his statements satisfactory.

The evening air, tropical and comforting, was good to be out in. Cort disliked the idea of going back to the cottage immediately, and, deciding to take all the time he could, he turned aside from the usual approach to the place, and followed an overgrown path which ran across a field and through a clump of trees. The fear which had gripped him earlier in the evening had vanished, as the concern over his own implication with the matter increased.

He had gone perhaps three hundred feet when he was suddenly confronted with a spectacle so odd in these country surroundings that it made him stop still and open his eyes wide.

DOWN the path in front of him, through the half-light, came something which might have caused a less logical man than Ralph Cort to turn and bolt. It was a ghostly figure wearing a long, kimono-like cloak of black, transparent material, which revealed beneath it a dress similiar in cut and length, but white in color. The feet, as they moved noiselessly forward, were strangely white. Upon the head was something which, in outline against a patch of sky through the trees, looked like a warrior's helmet turned backward.

Cort glared at the apparition. He found it difficult to reconcile the disagreement between his brain and his eyes, for the brain said that spectres did not exist, while the eyes declared they did.

But before he had decided what to think, he saw that the figure, whatever it was, had turned out of the path and was entering a clump of mango trees.

For a moment the man forgot the grave affair on his hands as he tried to decide whether he should let curiosity or fear rule his actions. He wanted tremendously to follow that figure and see what it did or was. But at the same time a terrible fear of it grew in him. He walked on a few paces.

The figure now passed between two separated clumps of trees. Cort could see that it walked like any human being. But just as he was about to proceed into the mango grove toward it he caught a new and unexpected view of the figure which sent shudders through him and made him bolt and run down the path in the opposite direction. The back of the figure looked terribly contorted, and the right hand held something which gleamed in the light reflected from a somnolent pond nearby. Until Cort reached the road he was the victim of a painter's highly keyed imagination — he was certain he had seen a great, hunchbacked demon.

Once in the vicinity of his cottage, where he could hear the low voices of the two Hawaiians, his fear left him, and he cursed himself for a cowardly puppy.

If the automobile carrying the sheriff of Hauula had not arrived just then, Cort would probably have suggested that Paoli accompany him back to the mango grove—just for a look around.

As it was, he helped to load the body of Thomas Church into the

car instead. In a little while he was bumping along with the sheriff toward the train which would take him to Honolulu.

CHAPTER III

DEPRESSED

THE death of the prohibition agent, Church, had long since passed into the annals of the unexplained.

That he had been murdered was unquestionable, but by what means death had been induced was a mystery which neither the autopsy in Honolulu on the following day, nor subsequent theorizing, could settle. The officiating physicians agreed with the coroner that death had been due to cessation of the heart's functioning, caused by two drastic measures. First, they believed, Church had been anæsthetized by an application of ether to the nostrils. Second, he had received vicious poisoning.

But it was the second decision that they were unable to substantiate thoroughly. Examination showed that nothing poisonous had been introduced through the normal channels to the stomach, and the body showed no slightest mark or swelling which would indicate that poison had been injected through the skin. And what chiefly baffled them was the fact that they could not identify the poison which, upon analysis, they *did* find abundant in the blood.

A haze of very unpleasant suspicion continued to hang over Ralph Cort. It had been partially dispelled by the evidence of three Filipino plantation laborers who had seen him walking in the hills, several miles from his cottage, at about the time at which the physicians decided death must have occurred. Yet the circumstances surrounding the death, and the presence of Cort's fingerprints on the body, made it impossible for the authorities to dismiss him completely from the case. He was kept under observation.

The strain was great. Ralph Cort, severely enough broken up by the murder of his friend, found that the suspicion hovering over him would sooner or later break him. He was a sensitive man, and the ugliness of the whole case had made deep furrows in his happiness.

HE TOOK a bungalow at Waikiki with a fellow painter, and attempted to find peace of mind in hard work. He painted from early morning till late at night, but each evening found him as depressed as the previous one.

"Wilkins," he said one night, after the other had praised him for some of the work he had done that day, "you and I are dependent upon our work for our real happiness. If we can't or don't paint, we are miserably unhappy. But right at present I think this business of making pretty pictures is absolutely the bunk. I despise it."

The other painter turned to him in surprise.

"You ought to come out more and relax. You sit here thinking all night and painting all day. No wonder you're feeling low."

Then Ralph Cort made an announcement.

"To-morrow I turn detective," he declared. "I shall never be happy or paint a good picture until I have freed myself of the suspicion that's hanging over me, and I think the only way I can do that is to capture or get trace of the man who really killed Church."

"Well, that's a fine idea," admitted his companion, "but you have noth-

ing to work on. The police are doing everything they can, and they claim there are no clues."

Cort did not reply. He had expected this retort. But he knew that, even though Wilkins was so discouraging, he would be the first to do anything possible to help. He could always count on him if the necessity arose.

THAT evening Wilkins dragged Cort, protesting mightily, to a little party down in Flapper's Acre, where two girls from San Francisco had planned a surprise for a few of their friends.

"The best thing in the world for you right now is to loosen up and have a few good times. You'll be a different man," Wilkins urged.

Cort half agreed with his friend, and condescended to be managed for the evening.

As they walked down Kalakaua Avenue toward the girls' cottage, Cort was moodily silent. Suddenly he stopped and put his hand on Wilkins' shoulder.

"Do you know," he said, "I believe I have something to work on."

Wilkins was puzzled.

"Church said something to me once," continued the painter, "which has just popped up in my mind. I think it may lead to something. It's just a word—a word I remember hearing him use several times, and —yes, once he said it was his greatest obstacle!"

The other listened, but it was plain that he was somewhat annoyed by the persistence with which Cort kept thinking of the affair. Wilkins was on the point of telling Cort to forget it when he decided that the only way to make him forget it was to let him talk.

"Well, what was the word?"

"*Jitsu*—that was the word. I remember it plainly. But Church was always very guarded with me when we talked about his work. He didn't like my saying that prohibition agents were the biggest bunch of crooks in the country."

"*Jitsu?* Sounds like an abbreviation for *jiu jitsu*—the Jap wrestling stuff, or whatever it is."

Cort started off on a long monologue defending his opinion that it had nothing to do with *jiu-jitsu*, and Wilkins let him talk, for they were now approaching the "Straw Tent," as the girls chose to call their bungalow, and the sound of laughter and music drew his attention to gaiety.

"Come on, old boy, forget your *jitsu* stuff for now. You're being taken on a party."

CHAPTER IV

THE SHINTO PRIEST

PERHAPS an hour had elapsed before Helen Thompson and Jeanette Hill announced their surprise.

"Be quiet, everybody," called out Helen. "Jeanette's got something to say."

But Jeanette did not say anything immediately. She merely lifted her hands and clapped loudly three times. Responding to this, the door at the rear of the room opened, and in walked a figure dressed in the robes of a Shinto priest.

"This is Mr. Shinto," announced Jeanette, with a deep bow to the newcomer. "At least, that is what we call him, since he is deaf and dumb and cannot tell us his real name—or won't."

Mr. Shinto bowed courteously.

"He is one of the most important persons in the Hawaiian Islands. You must all know him, for he works the most enchanting spells on people that you can imagine."

The Japanese walked to the middle

of the room. From his back he unfastened a large, lacquered model of a shrine, and this he placed upon the floor. He did not speak.

His manner was that of the mendicant priest commonly seen in the Orient and sometimes seen in the oriental sections of Honolulu. And his costume was in every respect similar to that worn by such itinerant holy men. The robes were black and white, fastened around the waist with a heavy silken cord. On his feet the priest wore *tabe*, the white cloth shoe and stocking combination. On his head was a tall, fantastic covering not unlike a helmet turned backward.

The guests watched him curiously.

"All right, Mr. Shinto," ordered Jeanette. "Do your stuff."

At this the priest knelt in front of the shrine. He placed a finger upon a certain gilded decoration at one side, and directly the shrine was converted, with the abrupt rising of three panels, into a model American bar.

At the rear of the bar stood a miniature bartender who leaned forward expectantly and looked out at the surprised Americans with wicked little black eyes. Behind the bartender, standing upon shelves, were several rows of small bottles, held in place with spring-clasps, which bore labels familiar to those of the party who had been accustomed to indulge in alcoholic drinks before the days of the prohibition law.

An uproar of enthusiasm and laughter greeted this transformation. Mr. Shinto smiled broadly and moved to the back of the shrine. By placing his hand through an opening there, he manipulated the movements of the little bartender, who reached up and procured whatever the guests demanded. Each guest was required to get down on his knees, approach the bar, and order what he chose. And immediately the bartender poured the drink.

"These," explained Jeanette, "are merely samples. When you have decided what you really want, Mr. Shinto will go outside and get a life-sized bottle of your choice."

One of the guests, feeling curious about the large fan which hung from the priest's belt, took it up to examine it. But he had scarcely touched it when Mr. Shinto tore it from his hands and, bowing low, retreated a few steps backward.

"Ah, you mustn't touch him!" Helen advised. "That's something Mr. Shinto doesn't like one bit."

The fan became an object of curiosity, but no one else attempted to handle it. It was very large and handsome. Since it was closed, nothing but the outer stays were displayed; but these were very elaborate and of heavy metal, ornamented with inlaid stones.

After all the guests had been supplied with life-sized bottles of their choice, Jeanette informed the Japanese that his services for the evening would no longer be needed.

MR. SHINTO bent over the miniature bar, pressed an ornamented section corresponding to the one he had earlier pressed, and instantly the shrine was restored with the closing of the panels. This completed, the Japanese turned to fix the shrine on his back. In doing so, his eyes came in line with a window at the far side of the room, and for a second his oriental skin took on a deathly pallor. Then his eyes shone angrily, fiercely, and he took a step backward, almost upsetting the shrine.

Cort, who seemed to be the only one looking at the priest at that

moment, quickly followed his gaze, and just as his eyes met the window he saw the face of a man hurriedly retreat from the lower corner. This surprised the painter greatly, and he was on the point of calling the incident to the attention of Wilkins, who stood near, but on second thought he decided that it would be better to keep quiet at the moment.

Mr. Shinto was now bowing in his exaggeratedly courteous manner to Helen, and moving toward the back door. His control was admirable, and no one who looked at him then would have believed that he had been agitated only a moment before. Amidst loud demonstrations of appreciation from the guests, who were in the highest of spirits, the priest departed, still bowing.

Cort got to his feet quickly and went to the lounge on which Wilkins sat, talking to Helen. Cort apologized to the girl, a little nervously, and led Wilkins to one side.

"Did you see what I saw?" he asked. "At the window?"

Wilkins looked at his friend in amazement.

"You've had too much to drink, old man," he laughed. "You're seeing things."

While the two men stood arguing, the guests began to filter out through the front door to the veranda.

SUDDENLY a shriek came from outside the house. It was Jeanette's voice, and it was filled with fear.

The two men rushed out through the front door.

There they found that Jeanette had fainted into the arms of the man to whom she had been talking.

"I don't know what the devil came over her," the man was explaining. "All of a sudden, she just toppled over with a shriek."

"Didn't you see anything?" asked Cort.

"Not a thing. We were just standing here talking."

Wilkins interrupted.

"Well, whatever has happened, let's get her inside and bring her to."

Two men picked her up and carried her through the door. Cort and Wilkins tried to collect their wits.

Wilkins seemed to feel that something very unpleasant had happened.

"I don't know why. I just feel it in the air."

Cort reminded him of the face he had seen at the window.

"In things like this," Wilkins answered, without commenting on the face, "it's always a good policy to keep everybody together. And I think we'd better get a cop here right away. Do you feel queer, too?"

Cort agreed that he did—uncomfortably queer.

In the sitting-room they found all the guests leaning over Jeanette, who lay unconscious and very pale on the couch.

While Wilkins phoned for a patrolman, Cort tried to impress the rest of the guests with the fact that the girl needed air. He realized that some one would have to take charge of the situation.

"Nobody must leave this room for a few minutes," he declared so that all could hear.

The guests looked at him in perplexity and astonishment.

"Why? Has anything happened?" asked some one.

Wilkins was returning from the phone.

"Probably not," he assured them in a tone which did not support his words, "but there's nothing like keeping calm for a few minutes."

Suddenly Jeanette sat up and looked around her. Seeing Helen, she drew her close and whispered:

"Oh, Helen, I'm afraid something dreadful has happened!"

Hearing this, the guests began to show signs of distinct uneasiness. Some of them started to go out on the veranda, but Cort, in his newly assumed rôle of leader of sheep, stopped them.

Jeanette was talking again.

"Did any one of our party go outside the house?" she asked in anxious tones.

"Not a soul," said Helen, who had counted the guests quickly. "Every one is here."

Jeanette fell back with relief.

Wilkins, who was standing at the window, looking about intently, announced that the policeman was coming. He had seen him adjusting his motorcycle on its stand.

The guests became quite agitated at this announcement, and Cort tried to silence them.

"Yes," he explained, "we have called one. It will be better, you know, to have the law on our side if anything has really happened."

SUDDENLY his face went ashen color.

"Where's that newspaper man, Blain? When did *he* go out?"

Every one looked about in confusion. It was obvious that Blain was not with them.

Answering the loud knock at the door, Wilkins admitted the fat Hawaiian policeman.

"What's the matter?" asked the representative of the law. Then he opened his eyes wide as he realized that the people in the room had been drinking.

"Drinking party, eh?"

Cort hastened to explain. He walked over to the Hawaiian and talked quietly to him.

"Yes, we have all been drinking a little. But that has nothing to do with what we presume has happened. We called you because——"

Jeanette, who had been looking with wide eyes at Cort and the policeman, broke in with her explanation.

"Maybe I was wrong—I really can't be sure of *anything*—but I wish some one"—her voice broke in an hysterical sob—"would look around outside the house."

The Hawaiian did not wait for her to finish, but dashed out of the front door. Cort and Wilkins were at his heels, advising the others, as they went, to stay in the room and keep quiet.

At Cort's suggestion the policeman flashed his light toward the rear corner of the house, in the direction of the window at which the face had been seen.

Suddenly the light disclosed the prostrate figure of a man lying face up. Rushing to it, the Hawaiian knelt down and put his ear to the man's heart. Then he stood up, shook his head gravely, and looked searchingly at the two Americans.

Cort spoke first.

"Do you know who he is?" he asked, inferring that he himself did not.

"Do *I* know who he is?" muttered the officer. "Well, I guess *you* do, too—Bergson, our best federal man."

He whistled through his teeth.

"Whew! This *is* bad!"

HE turned to Wilkins, ordering him to call for the ambulance. Just then, as Wilkins started to move away, they heard a voice, very gay and somewhat jumbled, like the voice of a man very happy in liquor, come from behind a near clump of bushes.

"Hello, you old horse!" it called. And the next moment Blain, the newspaper man, came into sight. He

walked with obvious difficulty and chattered gaily. He did not appear to notice the man in police uniform.

"Still at it, you old rum hounds?" he was laughing. "Breaking the federal's heart again? I came back for my hat and—er—er—what's all this about?" he ended up abruptly.

Cort swallowed anxiously. His face and throat grew hot as the Hawaiian asked who "this bird" was, and whether he had been with the party earlier.

The answer to that question had already been made, for Wilkins, thinking it best to get Blain away from the policeman, had taken his arm and led him into the house, trying desperately as they went to impress the inebriate with the necessity for sobering up.

CHAPTER V

THROUGH THE FISHMONGER'S SHOP

OFFICIALS in authority had been particularly lenient with Ralph Cort in the proceedings following the death of Thomas Church, because, first, it was known that even if he did not agree with Church's business policies, he had always been an admitted friend of the prohibition agent, and, second, because Ralph Cort was a respected member of the community.

They had been lenient, but they had not let him out of their sight—and when a second federal prohibition agent was brought stiff and dead to the city morgue, with mysterious circumstances surrounding his death, and with Ralph Cort in the limelight, they were inclined to be suspicious of the painter.

In consideration of heavy bail, furnished by leading citizens, Cort was allowed to leave the precincts of the city jail, but he was continually under observation and thoroughly under the thumb of authority.

As for Blain, the poor newspaper man, an itinerant, working his way to the Orient, he rested securely behind bars. No one was sufficiently interested in him to bail him out, and the fact that he had been the only one seen outside the "Straw Tent" or in its vicinity sat heavily upon his chances of being given liberty. He was notorious as a character who went about constantly inebriated, cursing the prohibition men and swearing half-seriously that he would dump the lot of them into a hot bath of burning kerosene before he quit the Islands.

ON the second day after the murder and arrests, Ralph Cort stamped furiously into the central police station. He demanded to see the chief of detectives and the chief of police. No subordinates would satisfy him.

"This place is fast asleep!" he shouted angrily at the two surprised chiefs. "You let murderers go scot free, you arrest innocent men, and now you sit here dreaming when the whole town is talking about the disappearance of Jeanette Hill!"

The chiefs were too flabbergasted to answer. They gaped at the painter.

"It is quite obvious," continued Cort hotly, before they could say anything, "that the only way in which I can free myself of the damnable suspicion that is hanging over me and to stir up some action in behalf of Miss Hill is to get out and do something myself."

This incensed the chief of detectives. It scratched his vanity, for it was a direct insult aimed at his incompetence.

"What good are you to us?" he asked sneeringly.

"What good am I?" retorted Cort. "Well, I'll tell you what good I am in this. As you know by reports from your men who are forever dogging me, I have not been staying at home the past forty-eight hours. I have been looking around a little."

The chief of police nodded. He had received reports that Ralph Cort had been followed into the oriental section of the city the night before. But he did not comment, for he presumed that, from the way the reports had been made, his men had seen nothing in Cort's conduct which was suspicious. He also had his private doubts as to whether his men had been able to keep track of Cort, and he did not wish to invite embarrassment before the other chief.

"The fact is," continued Cort, "I not only think I have a clue to the murder of the two federal agents and the abduction, but I think I can show you your man."

At this the two chiefs burst out in loud peals of laughter. But the chief of detectives felt it necessary to say something severe.

"We have done all the investigating necessary. It only remains to prove either you or Blain, or both, guilty of the Bergson murder. We're letting you run about in your own way, because here on this island, with nothing to get away on but ships which we have under observation, it doesn't hurt to let you, and because, sooner or later, you are going to hang yourself on your own rope."

Cort glared at the large, uncultured man before him. Nausea hit at the pit of his stomach. The idea of his being forced to stand before such a man and act the part of a subservient was too much for him. He glared angrily and shook his finger at the chief.

"You poor fool," he shouted, "I am the only man on the Island of Oahu who can give you any clue to the real murderer of Church and Bergson. But you are too stupid to realize it."

This torrent of reproach was not received very well. The chiefs reminded Cort that he was not a free man, and that the less he antagonized them the better off he would be in the end. But they became gradually convinced before the conversation was over that Ralph Cort had information which they had not, and eventually they agreed to supply him, as he requested, with one detective, two special policemen and a touring car for the pursuit of a plan he outlined for the coming night. If Cort failed, they reasoned, nothing would be lost. If he brought in the right man—well, crowns of triumph for their own heads.

AT nine o'clock that night a large touring car, similar to many privately owned ones in the city, turned into the dimly lighted and bumpy road designated as River Street. Here Cort and Mandellos, the Portuguese detective, got out, leaving in the car the two special policemen in the front seat and Wilkins in the rear.

They walked along slowly, pausing at curious windows of small Japanese and Chinese general stores. They acted as though they had an evening before them with nothing in the world to do. An important feature in their work now was to "sink into" the district and appear to be a part of it.

Gradually moving away from River Street, they entered a medley of crooked, dark alleys which lay to the east. They crossed "Tin Can Alley," the backbone of the section both in location and as the hang-

out for oriental drug gangs, and presently came to a fishmonger's shop.

Cort outlined their prospective movements quickly. He liked the personality of Mandellos, who was a rather indolent though not stupid type, admirably fitted to Cort's purpose. He did not want a detective who would be constantly itching to do things his own way. He wanted an eye-witness rather than a leader in what he was about to do. He was well pleased with what fate and the chief had handed him.

"This is the third night in succession that I've been down here," Cort explained. "Unless I'm dead wrong, the man who is responsible for the two deaths and who now has Jeanette Hill in hiding, has his town headquarters not more than fifty yards from where we are standing."

"If you really believe that," said Mandellos, "then why the devil didn't you let the chief bring down a raiding squad with him and round him up in a few minutes."

Cort smiled.

"That," he said, "is exactly why I didn't tell the chief what I suspect. A raiding squad is precisely the thing we don't want now. We are here for information, not action. I saw the man we're after send off a big car last night, and my bet is that he has his real headquarters somewhere over on the other side of the island."

CORT pointed to the fishmonger's shop.

"Here's where we go," he said.

Reed baskets containing dried fish, squid, and eels were on display before the little shop, and inside, behind a high wooden counter, was a very old Chinaman, spectacled, sitting on a ludicrously high stool and bending over a pad of paper upon which he was drawing Chinese characters with a brush.

"Modern book-keeping," commented Mandellos, smiling.

Cort went directly up to the old man.

"Hello, Ah Chong!"

The detective was surprised to see the Chinaman's face light up in recognition and break into a broad smile of welcome.

"We're old friends," explained Cort. "I was trying to do portraits once, and I picked on Ah Chong. And when I sold the picture, Ah Chong and I had a party. Ah Chong knows more about Tin Can Alley than the police force will know in a hundred years."

The Chinese continued to grin with pride. He nodded in a friendly fashion to Mandellos when Cort introduced him.

Then the painter went up close to the Chinese and whispered something which the detective could not hear. In another moment the two Americans were being ushered through the back door into a series of very small, ill-lighted, and badly smelling rooms. Mandellos was all curiosity. Soon he discovered what it was all about.

"I arranged this with Ah Chong last night," Cort said, as he handed the detective a complete Chinese costume. "We couldn't have come into this section from River Street in Chinese togs—we should have been noticed. But from here we can get along much better with them."

Mandellos looked skeptical.

"It will be so dark where we are going," explained Cort, "that our faces and heads won't matter. It's merely the outline of our figures that will count."

Having completed their masquerade by donning little brimless hats

as the finishing touch, they made their exit through the rear door of Ah Chong's quarters.

ON either side of the courtyard in which they found themselves rose irregular wooden buildings two or three stories high. A dim light pierced a gateway at the opposite end and threw a long diagonal path of yellow across the rough brick pavement. Approaching it, Mandellos could see that the light was thrown from large stone lanterns which stood on either side of the entrance steps of a Japanese temple.

Cort thrust out his arm and drew Mandellos into the deep shadows as the dim light threatened to expose the latter.

"We'd be shot at right now if we were in our own clothes. These Chinese are used to seeing their own kind wandering about, but they hate the sight of white men here. Just beyond the temple, which is a sort of boundary, I judge, is a section in which only Japs live."

They climbed a rickety wooden stairway within the courtyard, and stopped on a rough wooden porch which ran along the building at the height of the second floor. Cort pointed to the end of the porch nearest the gate through which the dim light of the temple lanterns was shining.

"Last night and the night before I saw a priest come into the temple courtyard and walk around to the back of it. I could not follow him, but I could make out that he went into that shack at the rear of the temple. Our job is to watch for him, see where he goes to-night, and then get near enough to the shack to eavesdrop."

The professional detective thought this a very quaint if not foolish way to get a man. He suggested that they go back to the fishmonger's shop, phone the police station, and get a dozen men to come down right away. But Cort would not hear of it.

"I haven't any actual proof that the priest is a suspicious person. All I have to go by as yet is the fact that Church told me once that his greatest obstacle was *jitsu*, which suggests something Japanese. On the evening of the Bergson murder, this priest that we are watching for acted as bootlegger for the party. He looked angry as a snake when he saw Bergson's face at the window—do you see? I think there's some connection between *jitsu* and this priest."

FROM the end of the dark porch the two men could command a good view of the temple courtyard. Almost an hour passed as they waited, and just as Mandellos was on the point of calling the evening a wild goose chase, the priest, his back weighed down by a miniature shrine, entered the open area in front of the temple. Walking somberly toward the temple, the priest digressed slightly and, instead of mounting the temple steps, walked around the building to the rear. There he entered the door of the shack which Cort had previously pointed out.

The two men on the porch were about to retrace their steps to the stairway so they might get near to the shack when, to their surprise, they saw five Japanese, dressed in American clothes, emerge from a door at the rear of the temple and walk hurriedly toward the door of the shack. They were admitted instantly and disappeared within.

Mandellos had already planned an approach. He saw in a moment that the only safe and certain way was

to cross the rude and dark courtyard in which they were, clamber over a low stone wall beyond the streak of yellow light, and hide themselves in the deep shadow on the far side of the shack. He led the way and Cort followed.

Reaching their vantage point, they found that the walls were of such thin wood that they could easily distinguish the sound of the voices within the house. But all the words were Japanese, and these, save a very few which are familiar to people who have lived long in Hawaii, were meaningless to Cort. If they wished to know what was going on inside the shack, they would have to take a chance and look in through the bamboo-screened window.

And this they did.

INSIDE, they saw the priest standing before six men who were seated in oriental fashion on the matted floor. He had removed the shrine from his back and was taking off the black and white kimonos. In another moment he had stripped himself down to semi-nudity, retaining only a loin cloth. Mandellos could see that the priest held something in his right hand, but from his corner of the window could not distinguish what it was. Cort, at the other lower corner of the window, immediately recognized it as the elaborate fan which he had seen Mr. Shinto carry on the night of the party at the "Straw Tent." It seemed curious that the priest, who was visibly warm even in his unclothed state, did not use the fan, but kept it resting unopened against his right knee.

The room in which the seven Japanese were talking was almost completely bare, having in it nothing but a few cushions upon which they sat, an urn containing ashes, and a lighted brazier upon which stood a teapot.

The priest now squatted on the floor beside the urn, still holding the large fan in his right hand. He was talking vivaciously to the men before him.

Two words, easily understood by Mandellos and Cort, were audibly becoming the centre of a discussion. They were both names of towns on the northern side of the Island of Oahu, and it was not difficult to distinguish them as they occurred again and again, rising like beacons out of the sea of indistinguishable Japanese.

Suddenly Mandellos gripped the arm of his companion and drew him quickly away from the window. The detective flung himself over the low stone wall, and as Cort followed and disappeared into the rude courtyard at the back of Ah Chong's quarters, the young American heard the front door of the shack open suddenly and violently, and could make out the sound of feet hurrying out into the temple courtyard.

ONCE inside Ah Chong's shop, the two men changed hurriedly back into their own clothes.

"That was one narrow escape," said Mandellos excitedly.

Cort did not know about what he was talking.

"What do you mean?"

"What do I *mean?* Didn't you see that big Jap in civilian clothes snap a Colt automatic from his pocket and rush to the door. A fat chance we would have stood with that bird. I know him. He's served time for opium smuggling."

Cort looked downcast.

"As far as I'm concerned, we've lost out," he declared anxiously. "I thought we might be able to——"

Mandellos laughed.

"Guess it's a lucky thing you nad me along. Don't you know what's up?"

Cort looked dumfounded.

"I happen to know a few of their words. They were arguing about whether they should go to Kaneohe or to Waimanelo on the other side."

"Well, I got that!"

"Yes, but they have decided. You didn't get that. They're going to Kaneohe for some good reason of their own which I couldn't make out."

Cort looked both pleased and disappointed. He had wanted to be the brains in this game. Mandellos had taken the lead.

"Didn't you hear the priest say '*yoroshee des*'?" asked the detective.

"No. And, anyway, I haven't the remotest idea of what it means."

"Well, it's a pretty good bet. It means about the same thing as O. K. In other words, they've settled on Kaneohe."

CHAPTER VI

THE FAN

THE police car proceeded toward Kaneohe, on the other side of the island of Oahu, in advance of the car that contained the Japanese.

Mandellos, although he sat quietly between Ralph Cort and Wilkins, was turning over in his mind many things which neither of the others suspected. He was on a job, and it didn't satisfy him in the least that he was on the trail of a suspicious Japanese. His orders from the chief had been to keep close watch of Cort and to study his actions carefully. It was the chief's opinion that Cort was deliberately trying to throw the police off the track, theoretically, and also the chief's opinion that by letting him do his best, and following his movements accurately, they could get a much more satisfactory line on the painter. He had told Mandellos to let Cort do exactly as he pleased, but to watch his own step.

Mandellos, phlegmatic and lazy as he was, nevertheless had an excellent background for detective work in Honolulu and its vicinity. Entirely aside from the circumstantial evidence against the painter, Mandellos had already chalked up two things which made him side with those who believed that even if Cort had not committed the murders, he had had something to do with them. Of these two things Cort was blissfully ignorant as the car sped along in the direction of Kaneohe.

First of all, Mandellos knew a good deal about old Ah Chong, although the Chinese knew nothing about Mandellos. He knew that Ah Chong belonged to that class of Chinese who will not admit a foreigner to intimacy, and that the only ceremony through which he would condescend to accept Cort in friendship was the ceremony of the opium lamp. Perhaps Cort *had* done a portrait of Ah Chong. So far so good. But that broad grin of welcome on the old man's face meant but one thing to Mandellos. The party Cort had referred to must certainly have been an opium party, and any foreigner who played with opium was a suspicious character in the eyes of the law.

Second, Cort was entirely too familiar with all that Palama section adjoining River Street, and with Tin Can Alley. Respectable people, Mandellos was convinced, did not visit those sections enough to be familiar with them.

In short, Mandellos began to feel that the man the police were after sat beside him in that car and not

in the car which, he was quite certain, would soon be leaving Honolulu for Kaneohe, with the priest as one of its passengers.

THE road to Kaneohe runs up through Nuuanu, a luxurious tropical valley, breaks through the mountain ridge at the high pass known as the Pali, and then zigzags dangerously down to the plateau on the northern side of Oahu. Kaneohe bay and the town lie beyond, some ten or twelve miles by the crow.

"They're probably not many miles behind us," said Cort, turning to Mandellos. "These Oriental bootleggers travel like gentlemen, and like gentlemen in a hurry."

The detective agreed with him, and advised the policeman at the wheel to step on the accelerator. The big car dashed ahead over the smooth concrete road.

When they arrived at the intersection of the main road and the small rough lane which led down to the bay, four of the men got out, leaving the driver to park the car out of sight a little farther down.

"Better fix the distributor so no one can get away with the old bus, Brown," called Mandellos as the machine started off. He turned to Cort. "You can never tell who might get the notion of trying to get away with our car, and we don't want to be left out here all night." He said this rather pointedly.

Brown had scarcely rejoined them after parking the car when Wilkins shouted out a warning for all to duck into the bushes. A moment later a large limousine, running at great speed, came down the road toward the intersection of the Kaneohe road, and slowed down as it reached the place where the five men were hiding.

In the rear seat they could distinguish the figure of a priest in full, elaborate regalia, sitting sternly motionless, and holding in his right hand a large fan. Except for the chauffeur, who was also Japanese, there appeared to be no other person in the limousine.

The car turned slowly into the bumpy lane and started in the direction of the bay, some three-quarters of a mile beyond.

Mandellos quickly issued orders.

"Come here, Cort. You and I will follow that car. It can't go very fast over that rocky trail. And you—what's your name?—Wilkins—you go with Brown, here, to that clump of trees. There's no use in five of us sticking together. And you can't tell, there may be another bus coming along in a little while."

The detective turned to the last man and said something under his breath which the others could not hear, and then added in a louder tone:

"You better stick right here, Jack, and make sure nobody comes back out of this lane."

Taking Cort firmly by the arm, Mandellos started in the direction of the limousine.

"You and I are going to stick close together, see? Because we're the only ones here with any *brains*."

Cort smiled at what he accepted as a crude compliment.

THEY had to run for a distance of a hundred yards or so to catch up enough to see the tail light of the limousine. When they caught sight of it they slowed down again to a walking pace.

"Funny he doesn't seem to have any one with him," remarked Cort.

"Yeah," retorted the detective. He was beginning to wonder if he had been foolish to wander off alone with the painter. Maybe he

would get himself into a jam and get stuck up in a nicely prepared ambush.

"I thought maybe he'd have Miss Hill with him," said the detective a little sneeringly. But Cort did not notice the tone of his voice, for just then the tail light of the limousine flashed out of sight. It could not be ascertained for a moment whether the car had turned out of its course or whether the light had been turned off. But in another minute Mandellos pointed through a thick grove of trees to a light.

Cautiously the two men advanced to a point from which they could see into the grove. They saw the large car draw up before a country temple, and stop beneath one of the *tokii*—the gateways to the sacred place. And then they saw the priest climb out of the car, mount the steps, and enter the temple.

"I guess we've found his real hangout now," whispered Cort.

"Yeah," said Mandellos. "Probably we'll find Miss Jeanette Hill and the bodies of Bergson and Church come to life."

Cort could now see that he was being made sport of.

"You seem to think there's nothing in this," he said, a little impatiently. "Of course there is a chance that I'm dead wrong, but I think that's your man, right there."

"Well," drawled the detective, who was fast losing his interest in the Japanese priest, and cultivating one in Ralph Cort, "you lead and I'll follow."

THEY approached the temple from the rear, where everything was dark. When they had found a place through which they could look into the main room, they found that the priest was walking reverently backward toward the front door through which he had entered. It appeared that he had already executed whatever ceremony he had come for, and was ready to be on his way again. Mandellos and Cort had to hustle to get under cover before the Japanese reëntered his limousine and started to drive away in the direction of the lane by which he had entered. They followed as closely as they dared, and saw to their amazement that the car was heading back toward the main road for Honolulu.

To Mandellos, this seemed conclusive evidence that Cort had been either working on the promptings of imagination or was deliberately trying to mislead him for some practical purpose. He turned sharply on the painter as soon as the limousine was out of earshot.

"What did you bring us out here for? Do you think we've got nothing to do but go joy-riding and watching priests walk around in their holy robes?"

Cort was distinctly puzzled. He had fully expected to find this priest up to some deviltry which would give Mandellos and the police ample grounds for being suspicious of him. He had even expected to be able, through this one evening of investigation, to prove that the priest was a vicious man, and the likely murderer of the two federal agents. He had felt so confident that he was on the track of the right man that he had allowed imagination to guide his actions. And Mandellos' words did not encourage him.

The two men walked slowly back in the direction of the others. They did not talk, for each was occupied with his own separate thoughts.

They had gone about a hundred yards when suddenly they saw the flare of a strong light against a

tree some fifty yards beyond. Immediately they recognized the headlights of a car, and got into the cover of the bushes in time to avoid being disclosed. By the sound of the motor they knew that it was not the limousine in which the priest had departed, but to their great astonishment they saw distinctly, as the car passed them a few seconds later, that in the rear seat sat a man with a costume identical to the one the priest had worn. They could also dimly see that in the tonneau, standing so high as to protrude above the line of the doors some five or six inches, was a large reed basket, of rough weave, much like those to be seen in the fish markets.

AS soon as the car had passed down the road a safe distance. they crawled out of their hiding place and stood staring after it.

A hiss came out of the night from the direction of the car's first appearance, and the two men recognized, the next moment, that Brown, the special policeman, was trotting down the lane toward them. Behind him came Wilkins and Jack, also on the run.

"Something funny is up," said Brown as he came up to them. "That priest of yours just passed you again in another car. We saw a second car turn into the lane. Then we saw the big limousine coming back in our direction. The priest got out of the limousine, got into the smaller car, and started down toward the bay."

There was no time to waste if they wished to keep track of the disappearing car. The five men hurried after it.

"Did you see that big basket in the back?" asked Wilkins.

"Scotch whiskey," suggested Jack.

Mandellos ordered them all to "shut up, and hurry." His manner had suddenly changed. His tone of voice was slightly different as he again told Cort that they would stick together.

An occasional creak from the springs of the machine ahead of them as the wheels encountered a large bump kept the five men informed of its whereabouts. No lights helped, for they had been turned off. Everything was in utter darkness. The men had to move with the utmost care to keep from falling or making any noise.

They heard the car stop and the engine throttle down until it was motionless. Still there was no light coming from it.

Then they heard a sound which betrayed the fact that the large reed basket was being removed, with some difficulty, through the door of the automobile. There was a scratching, then the sound of the doors being carefully closed.

Following the original arrangement of division. the five men separated and went to the right and left as they heard footsteps retreating in the direction of the bay shore.

Mandellos and Cort, keeping to the left, rounded a small hill and were suddenly confronted by the sight of a curve of the bay, dimly illuminated by a camp-fire on the sand. As they drew closer, watching carefully, they saw, without much surprise, that the priest, accompanied by two other Japanese, was moving toward the fire. The attendants of Mr. Shinto, for such he appeared to be, walked several feet behind their leader, hampered by the weight of the heavy reed basket which they carried.

Cort felt encouraged as Mandellos said something beneath his breath indicating that, after all,

something interesting might come of the evening's work.

THE priest stood beside the fire. He could be plainly seen taking from his belt the large fan which was by this time quite familiar to both Mandellos and Cort. Raising it, unopened, above his head, he described a circle in the air, and instantly the five men, scattered behind in the bushes, saw the flash of a small light from somewhere out in the water. It flashed only once, and gradually died down to a reddish color, finally disappearing altogether. Then a sound, like that made by the fin-like oars employed by Japanese on their sampans, disturbed the utter quiet, and in a very few minutes there came into sight, illuminated by the amber light of the fire on the sand, a deep-sea sampan. It was equipped with sails and, as evidenced by the cabin amidships, with an engine as well.

Closer and closer it came to the shore. Cort and Mandellos watched in amazement, wondering how the craft could come so close to shore without grounding on the reef. But as it came on they realized that a narrow channel must have been cut in the coral for the special purpose of admitting it. There was no wharf at the water's edge. Not even a plank.

On the deck of the sampan could now be distinguished two men in loin cloths and head-bands, apparently fishermen. A third, similarly clothed, was at the stern of the boat, manipulating the single oar which protruded backward like a slender rudder.

The sampan came to a halt within five feet of where the Japanese priest stood. It was still floating in comfortable depth. One of the fishermen, with a quick movement, jumped into shallow water three or four feet in front of the boat, and leaned all his weight foreward on a straw rope which was fastened to the bow of the sampan. Simultaneously the other two fishermen tossed across the rope, in rapid succession, curious sacks which hung like saddle-bags and slid easily down the rope to the man on shore. When several bags had collected, he removed them from the rope and carried them near the fire, then returned for more. This procedure was entirely noiseless from the distance at which Mandellos and Cort were crouching.

Apparently the fishermen had put ashore everything they intended to, for now the one who had been ashore began to clamber up the bow of the sampan on the straw rope. But he slid down again when he saw the two men on the bow pointing to the priest beside the fire.

AND now a most surprising and horrible pantomime took place. The men in cover of the bushes could see what was happening, but could not hear a sound.

The priest was pointing to the large reed basket which stood near him. Plainly he was ordering the fisherman to help the two men who had carried it to the beach, to put it aboard the sampan. The fisherman glanced into the basket, tipping up the cover, and immediately took a few steps backward. He was amazed at the contents and was refusing to have anything to do with it.

At this the priest seemed suddenly to lose all control in a frenzy of anger. Cort and Mandellos, watching intently, saw him grasp the fisherman fiercely by the throat, snatch from his own belt the elaborate fan, and strike the man heav-

ily on the scalp with the metal braces.

A single word, cried out in despair and appeal, issued loudly from the fisherman's mouth as he was struck.

"*Jitsu!*"

Cort sprang from the bushes and started toward the fire. Mandellos was at his heels, his revolver drawn. At the same time Brown, Jack, and Wilkins dashed out of the shrubs on the other side of the small hill.

But none of them reached the beach in time. In fact, the movements of the priest were so lightning-like that he had accomplished what he wanted to do before the five men could act. After hearing the resounding impact of the fan against the fisherman's head, Mandellos and Cort, approaching the struggling pair from the left, saw the priest clamp the side of the fan sharply against his victim's nose. Then, as the fisherman emitted the word "*Jitsu,*" and gasped for breath, they saw the priest thrust the fan suddenly into the open mouth.

The fisherman rolled over on the ground.

THE report of revolvers emptied into the air by Mandellos and his men rent the silence. Jitsu wheeled around, saw at a glance that he would be overpowered, and dashed toward the sampan.

The two confederates who had originally carried the basket to the beach had grasped the bulky load when the fisherman had refused to touch it, and had already loaded it on the bow of the sampan and pulled themselves aboard. Jitsu, with a mad roar and gesticulations, seemed to be ordering them to get the basket out of the way.

A shot from Brown's automatic, striking the priest's hand, sent the fan to the sand, and Jitsu, stooping to pick it up, paused long enough to get another bullet in the thigh. With a second howl he grasped at the straw rope, which still depended from the prow of the boat.

He had scarcely touched it when, with a sudden chug, the engine in the sampan broke into wild revolutions, and, with the force of the reversed propeller, the craft trembled furiously and darted off stern-foremost. Still clinging to the rope, Jitsu was dragged over the surface of the water, groaning with the bullet wounds in his hand and thigh. His ornate fan, which he had managed to secure to his belt as he ran toward the boat, dangled freely, a pendant upon a pendant.

Only a few seconds had elapsed since the firing of the first shot. Cort and his five companions all arrived at the fire at about the same time. Brown rushed to the prostrate figure of the fisherman, and in a moment looked up to announce death.

Mandellos and Jack continued to fire at the escaping sampan, but it had already drawn out of the small area of light thrown by the fire, and they could not tell in which direction to shoot.

The sampan, meanwhile, overloaded on one side, was careening wildly. The impact of the sudden start had snapped the controls, and the rudder, left forced to one side, made the boat list dangerously to starboard.

SUDDENLY there was a terrible crash, and the sound of breaking wood splintering against sharp coral. The spinning propeller could be heard to snap off as it struck rock, and the engine, released from its strenuous work, burst ahead in a rage of speed.

Mandellos, who had been standing near the fire and shooting constantly in the direction of the sampan, saw Cort throw off his coat and leap into the water. He raised his revolver to fire. To his mind this move on Cort's part was indicative of only one thing—that the painter was not on the level and was trying to make a getaway with the men on the sampan. But he had no sooner raised his revolver than Wilkins, who had happened to look up then and catch the purpose in the detective's eye, knocked the automatic from his hand and covered the detective with his own revolver.

"For God's sake!" he bellowed angrily. "What do you think you're trying to do? Haven't there been enough deaths already?"

Mandellos snarled. This seemed double proof that he had been trapped. He called to Brown and Jack, who ceased firing at the sampan, and quickly overpowered Wilkins.

The four men stood speechless at the water's edge. None knew what to think or do.

The roar of the sampan suddenly began to diminish. Evidently some one aboard had had the presence of mind to shut off the ignition before the engine should shake itself free, or end in a terrific explosion by igniting with its exhaust the fuel which must certainly be running about freely. As the sound ceased, the men on the sand heard a loud cry for help.

The voice was Ralph Cort's.

The cry surprised the two policemen so much that, momentarily, they loosened their grip on Wilkins, and the latter, stooping suddenly, picked up the revolver he had knocked out of Mandellos' hand. He had seen what the others were just now seeing.

In the water, about twelve feet from the sampan, which lay wrecked against the reef and about twenty feet from the shore, were two other figures approaching each other steadily. One was Jitsu, the other Ralph Cort. Jack threw a heap of dried twigs on the fire, and the sudden flare disclosed a large area of water which had previously been dark.

In his right hand, which was bleeding profusely from a wound, the Japanese held the elaborate fan. Slowly he raised it for the stroke with which he intended to send Cort, unconscious, deep into the water.

Wilkins' revolver cracked. The knowledge that he *must* shoot straight if he would save his friend's life had evidently helped him in his marksmanship, or else fate had helped, for the next instant the men on shore saw the bleeding hand of the priest go down into the water once more.

And then something quite unexpected happened.

From the bow of the sampan one of the fishermen could be seen diving out toward Jitsu and Cort, neither of whom saw him.

Wilkins shouted a warning to Cort, but he had scarcely got the words out of his mouth when he saw the head of Jitsu sink slowly under the surface, as though drawn down by some persistent, powerful force from below. Cort once more struck out for the sampan.

Instantly Wilkins saw Cort's great danger. If he should reach the sampan, he would certainly be killed by the men on board, who, though obviously unarmed with guns, since they had not returned shots, were undoubtedly armed in some other way. Tossing off his clothes, he plunged in after Cort.

Very nearly winded, Cort was

making little progress, and Wilkins caught up to him in a few strokes.

As he reached his side he was horrified to see, rising above the surface, the arm of Jitsu, limp and sagging. From the wrist hung the fan.

Cort was still struggling toward the sampan.

"Come here, you fool!" Wilkins shouted at him, though he was only a few feet away. "They'll kill you on that boat!"

But Cort did not seem to hear. Persistently, he flung out his tired arms in the direction of the sampan.

He was as illogical as a drowning man, and Wilkins knew there was only one way to prevent him from going on. Snatching the fan which hung from Jitsu's wrist, he started after Cort.

A loud crack sounded. The men on shore saw the fan strike heavily against Cort's skull, and saw Wilkins catch him, and, with a deft twist, turn him on his back and propel him toward the shore.

So many unbelievable things had already happened that the representatives of the law were not surprised to see the head of the fisherman who had dived from the bow of the sampan earlier now emerge for an instant a little behind Wilkins and Cort, and again suddenly disappear. In a moment they saw the head reappear and they saw a brown, hairy hand, clutching Jitsu's fan, rise out of the water. They saw the fisherman drag the body of the priest to the surface with the other hand. They saw him clamp the side of the fan against Jitsu's nose, and they saw him thrust the end of the fan far down into the unconscious man's open mouth.

This done, the hairy arm flung the fan ashore, and the fisherman, dragging Jitsu down with him, disappeared beneath the surface.

CHAPTER VII

THE BASKET ON THE SAMPAN

HEN Cort opened his eyes he muttered three words and fell back into unconsciousness.

"Get aboard sampan," was all he could say.

Wilkins turned to Mandellos.

"I have no idea why we should, but I'm certain there's a good reason."

He looked up and down the shore, as though hoping to find some undiscovered rowboat which they might use for the purpose.

"It's perfectly simple," said the detective. "You just follow me."

Mandellos walked about fifteen paces away from the fire, dropped his trousers, shoes, and coat, and, turning in the direction of the water, proceeded to walk out into it.

It looked at first as though the big detective would walk off into water over his depth, but presently the others realized how simple it was. The sampan had come in, and partly backed out, through a channel, deep, but very narrow. The reason it now lay wrecked was that the shoal on either side of the channel was very prominent.

They could easily walk out to the boat because the coral reef, near shore, was not more than three feet under water, and in spots much less.

Everything had become suddenly very quiet, and the only noise as the men walked out toward the sampan was that caused by the movement of their legs through the water.

Mandellos drew his revolver. Turning to Brown beside him, he

whispered his prediction that the fishermen were lying quietly on board in wait for them.

"They'll probably slice our fingers off as we climb up," he said.

Brown did not agree to this.

"The chances are that they've pushed off into the water on the other side of the sampan, and are swimming for their lives."

Reaching the sampan first, Mandellos demanded "hands up" and, by way of persuasion, fired twice over the deck.

No sound answered, and Wilkins, knowing that some one must lead, began to clamber aboard. Once on deck, he looked hurriedly around. No one was in sight. The other three men got aboard.

"What the devil could Cort have meant?" Mandellos asked himself aloud.

But as he said this his eyes fell upon the large basket that had been so featured in the proceedings a little while before. It lay on its side in the engine-room, too tall, evidently, to be stood on end. The reed cover hid the contents.

The detective, flashlight in one hand and automatic in the other, stepped down into the cabin and kicked the basket. It neither moved nor made any tell-tale sound. He snatched the lid from the top.

"Ye goas!" cried Wilkins in astonishment.

In the basket, huddled together and evidently unconscious, was Jeanette Hill.

When they got her out and laid her on the sloping deck of the sampan they found that she was breathing heavily. Her face was as white as paper, and her hands were quite limp.

"Doped," announced Brown. "Well, what do you know about that?"

A rapid search of the boat showed that no other living person was aboard, and the four men, climbing over the hull on the shallow side, carried the girl ashore.

THEY found Cort near the fire where they had left him, still in a dazed though not wholly unconscious state. They turned all their attention to bringing Jeanette back to consciousness, but their efforts failed.

"Saturated with some kind of dope. She probably won't come to for several hours," said Mandellos.

Ralph Cort rapidly regained consciousness when he rolled over and saw the men bending over the figure of Jeanette. He staggered over to where she lay, and appeared to be greatly elated when they told him she would be all right after a little while.

Wilkins looked at Cort, self-satisfaction showing in his expression.

"Well, I guess we did it all right."

"Did what? Where's the *murderer?*"

At this the four men, who had been all-engrossed in getting to the sampan and rescuing the girl, suddenly realized that they had not yet completely accounted for the priest.

Brown had an idea.

"He's caught on the coral at the bottom of the channel, or I miss my guess."

A theory was not of much use. It would be necessary to find out exactly what had happened, and the men began to stir their wits again.

Brown, at the water's edge, cried out a discovery.

"Look! A piece of the priest's robes."

He fished ashore a fragment of the black kimono.

"That fisherman certainly gave him a good ducking for killing his mate," he observed.

This carried them all back to the scene of Jitsu attacking the fisherman, and they realized abruptly that the body of the one who had been killed, and who had been lying face down on the sand when they started for the sampan, was nowhere to be seen. But a path of ruffled sand told them all of what had happened. It ran from the spot where the body had last been seen down to the edge of the water, where it had been dissipated by the lapping of the rising tide. It was plain that one of the fishermen, whether or not the one who had dragged Jitsu down into the water they could not tell, had returned to wipe out traces of the gang by taking away, through the water, the body of the man the priest had killed.

MANDELLOS suggested that one of the crowd should dive down and attempt to discover what had become of the priest. Since no one else would volunteer, he threw off his remaining clothes and plunged into the water.

But he had not been beneath the surface more than five seconds when the men on shore saw him rise suddenly again and strike out frantically for the shore. In a few strokes he had reached the sand. His face was distorted with fear.

"Why didn't you tell me there were sharks in this bay?" he demanded, his whole body trembling with fright.

No one spoke, but the solution became immediately apparent. Sharks, it is known, will not ordinarily attack a person moving violently in the water, and clever Hawaiian and Japanese fishermen, their dark skin aiding them, can keep out of the way of a shark. In fact, the natives of Hawaii will dive down into shark-infested water with the sole protection of a dagger, and, by swimming always on the opposite side from the mouth, turning when the fish turns and keeping always at its back, stab it to death and rise safely to the surface. But a motionless body in water is certain to attract a shark. Every one understood.

"Guess the fisherman hooked the priest on to a piece of coral," volunteered Brown, the theorist, "and then just swam away."

IT WAS plain that there would be no use in trying to do anything more in the dead of night. The small camp-fire was by this time beginning to flicker for lack of fuel, and they were all anxious to get back to Honolulu.

"We'll have to get this young lady to the hospital as soon as possible," said Mandellos, "so let's be going."

Jack and Wilkins picked up the limp body of the girl and started inland, following the path of Brown's flashlight.

They heard Mandellos calling out for them to wait. He was bending over the curious sacks which had been unloaded from the sampan.

"Anybody want a drink of Scotch?" he inquired with a laugh. "There's just about any kind of liquor you might fancy. First class, imported stuff. From England and France by way of the Orient."

He held up a bottle of Benedictine to the light of the dying fire.

"Same old stunt," he explained; "from a transpacific liner to a sampan, and from a sampan to the island. But you can't often catch them at it."

With the help of Brown, he gathered up the contraband. The party continued up the sand in the general direction of the car parked out on the main road.

Suddenly Cort stopped and called back to the detective.

"You've missed the most important thing of all," he called. "You should have got your hands on that big fan."

Brown retorted with manifest self-satisfaction:

"Wrong again! I've got it in my pocket—but what of it?"

CHAPTER VIII

A STRANGE FLUID

AN HOUR later Mandellos and his party drew up at the Central Police Station in Honolulu. On the way they had left Jeanette at the hospital, still unconscious but, according to the examining physician, perfectly safe.

The chief of police and the chief of detectives were chatting about an opium raid they had just conducted.

Seeing Ralph Cort, the chief of detectives looked at him sternly.

"Guess you're in it deeper than ever, Mr. Ralph Cort," said that officious person. "My men saw you go into a fishmonger's shop owned by a Chinaman called Ah Chong the other night. We raided the place just now. Do you recognize this?"

He held up a memorandum book upon the cover of which was printed in gold letters the painter's name.

"And," continued the chief, "we raked in ten tins of opium."

Mandellos stepped toward the chief.

"Excuse me for interrupting, but did you find anything belonging to me, too?"

The chief turned to the detective. He was anxious for the report.

"Well," he said gruffly, annoyed by his subordinate's manner, "what have you got to say?"

"Say?" retorted the detective. "It would take two books full."

He hastily gave the main points of what had occurred during the evening. Then he motioned to Brown to hand him something which protruded from his side pocket.

"Ever see anything quite as neat as this?"

He handed over to the chief the elaborate weapon patterned in shape and decoration after the fans of the Samurai warriors.

THE chief took the fan and looked at it curiously, studying the magnificent inlay work on the stays. He was about to open it when Mandellos snatched it away from him.

"We've seen this thing used, so we'll save you the trouble of killing yourself with it."

They all gathered about the rough office table. Mandellos took the fan in his left hand. With his right hand, as Brown had already done in the car while they drove down the long slopes of Nuuanu, he pushed aside a movable panel near the lower part of the handle. This was surprising, since the panel had previously looked exactly like the natural folds of a closed fan.

In the open chamber which was now disclosed they found two protruding hard rubber nozzles which appeared to be constructed to fit exactly the nostrils of a human being's nose.

"A perfect nasal douche bulb with a reservoir of ether," explained the detective, holding the fan closer so both chiefs could see it.

"And *now*," he continued—"now for the real surprise!"

Placing his thumb firmly against what looked like an ornamental scroll, a little above the ether chamber, he pushed sharply inward. Instantly the far end of the fan opened, and from the cavity within darted a needle which protruded about an inch from the end of the fan.

"Holy mackerel!" shouted the chief.

Upon minute examination it was discovered that the needle was hollow, a hypodermic needle, and that its inner terminus was set in a small bulb. From the side of the bulb, they found that a button protruded through the outer stay of the fan. The principle was not unlike that of the fountain pen, except that the fluid contained in the bulb could be ejected in rapid spurts by pressing the button.

CHEMICAL analysts, upon completing their work on the fluid that remained in the fan, declared that it was capable of almost instantaneous fatal poisoning, but they disputed long over the origin of the poison.

Some declared it had been extracted from the most deadly of scorpions, others that it was the poison of a specially bred species of asp, and still others that it was a combination of various deadly potions. All agreed, however, that they would not care to have it injected into the linings, of their throats.

The chances were that it had an exceedingly vile taste.

Spilling Salt

THE superstition that the spilling of salt will bring bad luck goes back to the earliest days, and no one can definitely say where or how it started. For a long time many people believed that the idea came from Leonardo da Vinci's great picture, "The Last Supper." Here Judas Iscariot, who later betrayed Christ and in remorse hanged himself, is shown accidentally upsetting the salt. But though this picture may have served to strengthen belief in the superstition, it could not have given rise to it, as the idea is many hundreds of years older than the picture. In Egypt salt was a metaphor for calamity and desolation, an idea easy to understand when we see the dreary salt wastes surrounding inland seas, such as the Dead Sea. To spill salt was, therefore, to spill calamity.

Salt was also regarded by ancient people as incorruptible. For that reason it became, with some races, a symbol, not of misfortune, but of friendship. Hence to spill salt in the direction of any person meant the severing of friendship with that person. The only way to undo the harm was for the person toward whom it fell to take a pinch of it between his finger and his thumb, in his right hand, and cast it over his left shoulder. This last gesture was supposed to appease the devil.

There, alongside the vacant lot, which was overgrown with trees and bushes, they lured the boy into the wagon.

Famous Unsolved Mysteries

A SERIES

By ALVIN F. HARLOW

5. What Became of Charlie Ross?

In these days, kidnapings are no longer rarities. But in 1874 the matter was entirely different. And people still wonder about the fate of little Charlie Ross.

ONLY a few weeks ago the New York newspapers printed a short item to the effect that Walter L. Ross had sold his seat on the New York Stock Exchange for $226,000. To a few this served to recall a mystery of more than half a century ago, which aroused not only all America, but even caused a wave of interest and sympathy in Europe—the kidnaping of little Charlie Ross. Walter L. Ross, now close upon sixty years of age, is not only a brother of the lost boy, but was himself for a time in the hands of the crooks who took Charlie away, never to be seen again by any one who knew him.

In the summer of 1874 Christian K. Ross, a gentleman in moderately well-to-do circumstances, was living on East Washington Lane in Germantown, a suburb of Philadelphia

which is about seven miles from the centre of the city. On July 1st of that year Mr. Ross's two eldest children had gone to visit an aunt in Middletown, Pennsylvania, while Mrs. Ross was at Atlantic City with her eldest daughter. Two little boys, Walter and Charlie, were at home with their father, but were expecting to join their mother at Atlantic City for the Fourth. Walter was then not quite six years old, while Charlie was only four.

ON the evening of July 1st Mr. Ross reached home from his business a little before six o'clock, and asked the servants where the boys were. A maid replied that they were playing on the sidewalk outside the yard with some other children. Mr. Ross could not see them, but he did not become anxious until half an hour had passed and he had inquired fruitlessly at the houses next door. He and his four servants then started out to search the neighborhood. A lady living a short distance down the street, next door to a large vacant lot, told Ross that she had seen the two boys go by her house late in the afternoon with two men in a wagon. This was still more disturbing, and Ross was becoming greatly alarmed when, just before dark, he met a man on a street near his home, leading the older boy, Walter, whom he had found lost in Kensington, one of the northern suburbs of Philadelphia. Walter was still so frightened from his experience that he could scarcely speak; but when asked where Charlie was he replied: "Why, he's all right; he's in the wagon," supposing that he himself was the lost boy, and not doubting that Charlie would be brought back home.

Walter said that on two or three days of the preceding week two men, sometimes in a buggy, sometimes in a wagon, had driven past their home, and each time had stopped to talk to them and give them candy. Kidnaping was practically an unknown crime in America then, and there was not the suspicion of strangers which naturally exists today; so, even though one or two persons had seen the men and the children, little had been thought of it.

Having thus established a friendship with the little boys, the men had come by in their wagon on the afternoon of the abduction and proposed to give the children a ride. They had lured the boys to a point alongside the vacant lot, which was overgrown with trees and bushes, and where they would not be so likely to be seen by neighbors, and there they had taken them into the wagon. Thence they had carried the children by a long and tortuous route, doubtless intended to baffle any possible pursuit, and covering several miles, before Walter had been dropped. Yet Walter, when taken by his father and his uncle next day, pointed out the course in full, describing landmarks and mentioning incidents which had happened along the way. Other witnesses were later found who had seen the boys in the wagon and who confirmed several of Walter's statements. The boy also gave a remarkably minute description of the personal appearance and clothing of the men, as well as of the horse and wagon.

According to Walter's story, Charlie, after being taken a few miles, began to fret, and wanted to go home. The men promised to take him home presently, and meanwhile comforted him by promising him candy and firecrackers. Finally, in Kensington, Walter was

given a quarter, put out of the wagon, and told to buy firecrackers and torpedoes at a little store on the corner. When he came out of the store a few minutes later, the wagon was gone. Evidently the men did not wish to be troubled with two boys, and thought the younger would be a little nearer to his parents' hearts and therefore more valuable to them.

It seems strange to us at the present day to think that the police did not discover the affair immediately when a crowd gathered around the weeping boy. But they did not, and it was left for a kindly private citizen to take Walter home to Germantown. There were no telephones then, the only quick communication being by telegraph. Mr. Ross hastened to the nearest police station, whence a telegram was sent to the Central Station, asking if a boy of Charlie's description had been reported from any of the district stations. After half an hour a reply came back that no such child had been heard of. Ross and his brother-in-law then drove down to the Central Office in the city, reaching it about eleven P. M. There was no one on duty save a sleepy captain, who expressed the opinion that the carrying off of the boy was just the whim of a pair of drunken men, and that Charlie would be picked up within the next few hours at some district station-house.

AS far as the records show, there had never before in America been a case of kidnaping for ransom, either of child or adult, and it did not seem to occur to anybody that such was a possibility in the present case. When the police on the following day finally got it through their heads that the boy had actually been stolen, they could think of no motive but revenge. They asked Mr. Ross if he had had any domestic troubles or quarrels with his kinspeople. What did he know about his servants? Had he discharged any servants lately? Had he any creditors who were giving him trouble? Had any one a grudge against him that he knew of? Had he ever served on a jury which had convicted a person of crime? All these questions proved pointless.

Mr. Ross published advertisements in the newspapers, offering rewards for information, and the papers gave the story of the abduction considerable space. A band of gypsies near Philadelphia were seized and their camp and baggage searched, but nothing was found to indicate that they had ever heard of Charlie Ross. A day or two later the postmaster of a New Jersey town wired: "The Ross child here. Send immediately." Officers went to the town, but whereas Charlie had been plainly described as a fair-skinned, light-haired child of four, the boy over whom the village had become excited was found to be a dark-skinned, black-haired, evidently Italian youngster who spoke broken English and who was not less than nine years old. This was only the first of a long series of such instances of human stupidity.

The true motive of the abduction was revealed on July 4th, three days after Charlie's disappearance, when an anonymous letter reached Mr. Ross, purporting to be from the kidnapers. It had been mailed in Philadelphia and was written in a disguised hand and with considerable misspelling, which was done with intent to mislead, for the writer was not as ignorant as he pretended to be. This first letter was as follows:

July 3—Mr. Ros—be not uneasy you son charley bruster be all writ we is got him and no powers on earth can deliver him out of our hand. You wil have two pay us befor you git him from us, and pay us a big cent to. if you put the cops hunting for him yu is only defeeting yu own end. we is got him put so no living power can get him from us a live. if any aproch is maid to his hidin place that is the signill for his instant anihilation. if you regard his lif puts no one to search for him yu money can fech him out alive an no other existin powers. dont deceve yuself and think the detectives can git him from us for that is imposebel. You hear from us in few day.

This letter was evidently intended merely to prepare Ross for a somewhat greater shock later. The police, who were now thoroughly aroused, toiled faithfully and to the best of their ability to find the child. Suspicious characters were looked up, the slums were scoured, and every tenement, ship, barge, canal boat, barn, and outbuilding in Philadelphia and vicinity, was searched. The hunt was extended to New York, Baltimore, and neighboring cities, and even into the country. The police in distant cities were notified. Hand-bills were distributed throughout the country, offering rewards for information.

TWO days after the arrival of the first letter the second one came. It demanded a ransom of twenty thousand dollars for the boy, and made threats to kill him if the money were not paid or the police got on the track of the kidnapers. "If yu love money more than child, yu be its murderer not us," the letter went on. "Yu money or his lif we wil hav." The missive concluded by telling Ross that if he was ready to do business, he must put an advertisement in the personal column of the *Public Ledger*, saying: "Ros, we be ready to negociate."

The receipt of the letters had not been revealed to the public, and therefore, when Ross ran the one-line ad as directed, it was not generally noticed. The advertisement appeared on the morning of July 7th, and by two P. M. of the same day he had received the third letter. It was maddening to know that the scoundrels were there in the city, and not to be able to lay hands on them. Detectives were set to watch the letter-drops at the main post-office, but as the newspapers heard of this, and with their accustomed cheerful disregard of consequences promptly made it public, the watch was thereby rendered useless, the crooks shrewdly posting their letters in street boxes in various parts of the city.

Several communications now passed, at intervals of from one to three or four days, the kidnapers writing long, wordy letters and Ross always answering by a short "personal" advertisement in the newspapers. They presently instructed him to use the name "John" in addressing them. He told them in these bits of type—and truthfully, too—that he did not have the twenty thousand dollars, but would do his utmost to raise it somehow. The crooks, who evidently read all the newspapers every day, became convinced that he was telling the truth, for in a later letter they expressed regret for having overestimated his resources, saying that they would have been willing to scale down the price a bit, but that it had cost so much to prepare for the job, the police were making it so hot for them, and they were spending so much to board Charlie and keep him hidden ("in the country," as they more than once remarked), that they felt they could not afford

to take a dollar off the amount demanded.

Ross finally notified them in the usual way that he had succeeded in getting the money together. In reply, they instructed him to have it ready "in a small, rough box" when their agent called for it, and Charlie would be in his hands within five hours thereafter. Ross demurred at this, asking that the boy and the money change hands simultaneously; but to this they would not agree. It was intimated in the newspapers that perhaps they did not have the child at all, but were merely attempting blackmail. Their very first letter had contained one word which almost convinced the agonized parents that the writers of the letters really had Charlie in their clutches. That one word was the boy's middle name, Brewster. Scarcely any one outside the family knew of this name, and there seemed little doubt that the crooks had learned it only from Charlie's own lips. But now that their "honor" was questioned, the kidnapers wrote further proofs to Ross. They described minutely Charlie's dress when he was stolen, even down to the darned places in his stockings; they said that he was fretting for fear he would not get home in time to join his mother and sister at Atlantic City; and gave two or three other bits of evidence which dispelled all doubts in the minds of the Ross family.

In every letter they reiterated their threats against the child's life if the money were not paid. They said that the place where he was being kept was "no fit place for a child," but that he was still in good health. In more than one letter they declared that Charlie was to be made an example for the benefit of other parents whose children they might kidnap in future. If Charlie were not ransomed, his life would pay the forfeit as a warning to other parents to come across more readily with their money. But if the cash were handed over for him, it would be to their interest to deliver him safe and sound, to prove that they "always did business on the square."

IT was early August before they finally outlined the plan by which the money was to be turned over to them without hazard on their part. On a certain night Ross was to take the New York train on the Pennsylvania Railroad, leaving Philadelphia at midnight, and reaching Jersey City at 5:05 A. M. Thence he was to cross to New York, go to the Grand Central Station, and board the New York Central train leaving at eight A. M., on which he was to travel to Albany. All the way on each train he was to stand on the rear platform of the last car with a valise in his hand containing the twenty thousand dollars in small bills, none larger than a ten—this, of course, to make the money easier to spend without arousing suspicion. A man whom the writer of the letter referred to as "our agent" (possibly the writer himself) would probably appear somewhere along the line to claim the money. If it should be during the night, he would appear beside the track as the last car passed, and he would hold a torch in one hand and a white flag in the other. If in daylight, he would ring a bell with one hand and hold a white flag with the other. As soon as Ross saw these signals, he was to drop the bag on the track, and then he might leave the train at the next stop if he liked. If the train continued on its way, the kidnapers would consider that he had kept

faith with them, and Charlie, they said, would be restored to his family in a few hours; but if the train stopped quickly and an attempt was made to arrest the agent, Charlie should pay for the trick with his life. The writer warned Ross that there was no telling where the signal would appear; it might be on the very outskirts of Philadelphia, or it might not be until the train neared Albany. If no signal at all appeared before he reached Albany, Ross was to go to the post-office in that city, where he would find a letter addressed to C. K. Walter, telling him what to do next.

The plotters demanded several hours' time before delivering the boy, because they wanted to examine the money given them and make sure that there were no secret marks on it by which they would be betrayed when they began to spend it—a natural and justifiable fear on their part. But of course this was not satisfactory to Ross. He had no assurance that such villains would release his child even after getting the money; they might even make a demand for more. Torn by agonizing indecision, he consulted the police and a number of prominent bankers and other citizens who had constituted themselves a sort of committee on the subject. They advised him not to risk the money on such a chance, but to put into the valise a letter, telling the crooks his attitude, urging a less public method of communication, and demanding that they work out some way by which the boy could be returned when the money was paid over.

Ross, though almost distracted by anxiety, decided to accept this advice. The letter was written and placed in the bag, and, accompanied by his nephew and a detective, Ross left Philadelphia on the train specified and rode to Jersey City, a trip then consuming five hours. Thence he went on to New York City and took the New York Central train to Albany—an all-day journey. Throughout each of these long stretches he stood on the rear platform with eyes and attention strained to glimpse the possible man with the signals, never daring to look into the car behind him for a moment lest he miss him, startled by every track laborer, every movement in the bushes, every lantern or bit of white cloth. But Albany was reached and no signal seen. He and his companions called at the post-office, but there was no letter for C. K. Walter, and next day Ross left Albany for home, much disappointed.

UPON reaching home, he found a letter from the crooks, upbraiding him for not carrying out the agreement. They had been misled by the statement (based on the flimsiest rumor) of an evening paper just a few hours before his departure, to the effect that Ross was going to Pottsville, Pa., next day to investigate one of the supposed Charlie Rosses who were then being "discovered" by the dozen all over the country. Ross had had no intention of going to Pottsville, but the conspirators, deciding that he did not trust them, had not sent their agent out along the railway to meet him. How they must have cursed their ill-luck and the editor who published the false report! They never knew that instead of the twenty thousand dollars, they would have gotten only a letter.

On his return, Ross addressed them through the personal column thus:

John—Your directions were followed, you did not keep faith. Point out some sure and less public way of communicating either by letter or person.

But the kidnapers were entirely too shrewd to fall in with this suggestion of Ross's. To this item they replied with the usual lengthy letter, regretting that they had been misled, and suggesting a new method of delivering the money.

Yu wil hand the box with the amount in to our agent when he calls to yu store. Yu wil hand him the box, ask no questions—not folow him —not put any one to folow him—not notify the detectives so they can folow him.

They still insisted that several hours must elapse before the child could be returned. To this Ross replied, insisting that the exchange must be simultaneous. All advisers were urging him not to pay the men anything, or, at least, not to give them money before his boy was in sight. A letter to him from General Simon Cameron, Pennsylvania statesman, is typical of the advice that he received. General Cameron said, among other things:

I trust you will make no compromise with the bad people who have stolen your child. Refuse to give them money, and they will have no motive for retaining the boy. God will protect him. If you pay now, you will have to pay again. . . .

"If they pay the villains' demand, no man's child will be safe in future," said a police chief. The Ross family might have been excused for refusing to concern themselves with possible future kidnapings until they got their own child back safely. They would have been willing to give their last dollar to attain this end; but they were haunted by the fear that even after giving up the twenty thousand, Charlie might still be held back from them.

Meanwhile, the Mayor of Philadelphia had offered a reward of twenty thousand dollars—which had been pledged by wealthy citizens—for the capture of the kidnapers and the return of the boy to his parents. The public had become aware that Ross was addressing the men through the newspapers, and the personal columns were scanned eagerly every day and surmises made as to the progress of the negotiations. Interest in the case was intense all over America and even in foreign parts. Circulars bearing Charlie's picture had been distributed in this country and Europe, and scarcely a day passed that some child traveling with an older person was not suspected of being the lost boy. Dozens of innocent persons were arrested by local authorities in cases like this and held while telegrams were sent to Philadelphia: "Have Charlie Ross here. Send officer at once." In a majority of cases, the suspected children were ridiculously unlike Charlie.

Floods of letters came to Ross and the city police. Welcome letters of tender sympathy came to the parents even from England and Scotland, but there were others of different tenor, giving all manner of suggestions for finding Charlie, professing to have certain knowledge of his whereabouts, and demanding the reward or a part of it before giving any information. Some writers even claimed to be the kidnapers themselves, and a few of these maliciously added that because the money had not been paid over, Charlie had been put to death. Spiritualists, astrologers, mesmerists, and what-not offered to practise their arts for the boy's recovery, and some of them did so, but to no avail. Not a few persons wrote to the police and city authorities, insisting that the kid-

naping was a fake—that Ross himself was the plotter and the whole thing a scheme to get twenty thousand dollars from his fellow citizens.

IT was late in August when Mr. Ross heard from the crooks again, the letter coming from New York. They claimed that they had gone to Canada to see whether it would be possible to effect a direct exchange of the boy for the money there with safety to themselves, but that they had found the plan to be impracticable. They again made threats to kill Charlie, saying that they could not trifle with the affair much longer, as they were going to Europe in September.

But meanwhile a clue to their identity had been found. With such horror was their crime regarded that even many professional criminals repudiated it, and a few even offered to assist the police if they could learn anything about the kidnapers. It was something of this spirit which led a man—himself not known as a professional crook, though evidently of not untainted character—to tell a New York police captain that he believed he knew who had perpetrated the crime.

He said that several months before Charlie was stolen two men had asked him to join them in a plot to steal a child of the Vanderbilt family from a mansion on the shore of Long Island Sound, but that he had refused to go in on the deal. He said that the tactics adopted in the case of Charlie Ross were somewhat similar, and he believed that the same mind had conceived the latter crime. The real names of the two men he had in mind were William Mosher and Joseph Douglas—though each had several aliases—and he thought they lived, or had formerly lived, in Baltimore.

The captain did not take the matter very seriously, but reported it to his chief, Superintendent Walling of the New York police, who decided to look further into it. He interviewed the informant, who described Mosher's handwriting. When shown the anonymous letters received by Ross, he declared that they had been written by Mosher. His description of the personal appearance of the two men sounded remarkably like that given by Walter Ross of the two who had given him and Charlie that fateful ride.

The New York police now became active in the case. Mosher and Douglas were known to some of them as river thieves, each having at least one conviction against him. In fact, Mosher was at that moment a fugitive from justice, for he had been arrested for burglary in New Jersey three years before, and had escaped from jail before his trial took place. In the past year neither he nor Douglas had been seen around their old haunts in New York City. Mosher was by trade a boat-builder, and this knowledge caused a fresh search of all vessels around New York harbor, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and up and down the Delaware River and Chesapeake Bay, but without results.

The New York detectives also learned that Mosher had a brother-in-law named William Westervelt, a discharged patrolman, living in New York City. Superintendent Walling sent for him and asked him if he knew where Mosher was. He replied that he did not. Walling then asked him to assist the police in finding Mosher and Douglas; and after pretending to consider the matter a while, he agreed to do so. The childlike simplicity

of this procedure on the part of the police seems almost unbelievable at the present day. Modern detectives would simply have shadowed Westervelt—camped on his trail day and night until he led them to their quarry. As it was, all the time he was pretending to be endeavoring to help them, he was really in touch with the hunted men, warning them of every move made against them.

They were now very nervous over the situation and kept moving about. Letters sent to Ross in late August, September, and October were postmarked New York City, New Haven, Rondout, N. Y., and New Brunswick, N. J. The police urged the Ross family to hold out, declaring that the crooks would soon be in their hands.

"I am satisfied I could get Douglas," wrote Walling to the Philadelphia police on the strength of statements made to him by Westervelt, "but I do not want him without Mosher"—and Westervelt was pretending that he did not know where Mosher was. "I think that Westervelt has kept faith with me," Walling continued. The time came when he was chagrined to find how gullible he had been.

IN October Mr. Ross and his wife could bear the strain no longer, and the distracted father notified the abductors that he was willing to come to terms. Before anything could be arranged, however, he suffered a complete nervous and physical breakdown, and for the next two months he knew little of what was going on. His brother, his nephew, and his brothers-in-law now carried on the negotiations. They asked the kidnapers, through the *New York Herald*, which they had used for their communications for some weeks, whether a kinsman could act for Ross. Considerable haggling over arrangements now ensued.

Walling, meanwhile, objected in letters to Philadelphia: "I wish the boy's friends could make up their minds to defy the kidnapers," said he. "Had they done so a month ago, I believe the child would now be at home with its mother. Nothing but the hope of gain, and of being able to make a bargain for their security, I am confident, causes them to keep possession of the child." Walling had been mistaken about other things, and there is a strong probability that he was also mistaken in this matter.

The Ross family demanded that the kidnapers give them some other name than John to use in newspaper personals, as that had become too well known. The crooks now directed that Ross's representative must come to a New York hotel on a certain date yet to be agreed upon, and await orders. In the last letter received from them they gave the name Saul of Tarsus by which to address them, declared that they were tired of quibbling and would write no more unless the Ross family came to the scratch.

A "personal" was accordingly run in the *Herald*, reading: Saul, of Tarsus. Fifth Avenue Hotel, Wednesday, the 18th inst. All day." It was signed with a fictitious name, F. W. Lincoln.

On the evening of the 17th of November, Mrs. Ross's brother and her nephew registered at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, using the name given, F. W. Lincoln, and remained there until the following night. They had with them a handbag containing twenty thousand dollars in small bills. For thirty hours

they did not leave the hotel room, but no one called for the money nor even inquired for them. Next day they ran an ad reading: "Saul of Tarsus. We have performed our part to the letter; you have broken faith. We will have no more trifling; action must now be simultaneous."

No answer was ever received to this notice. The last word in the correspondence had been written. The only thing that could be surmised was that at the critical moment the crooks had been afraid to go to the hotel. "The parties are hard up and have come to the end of their tether," wrote Walling. "We are pushing them so hard that they dare not get out to do anything." The police were now doing things which they should have done long before. One detective had taken a job as a waiter in a restaurant where the hunted men had formerly been wont to eat. A fence at whose place they had once hung out was watched night and day. Once officers entered a saloon less than an hour behind them. It was said that during the day the kidnapers had to stay on boats in near-by waters, not daring to enter the city save at night.

NEARLY a month passed after the last communication from them. Then the end of the story came with startling suddenness.

In the southern part of Brooklyn, overlooking New York harbor, was a suburb called Bay Ridge—now a thickly built district, but then a region of spacious, semi-country homes. In two of these, adjoining each other, lived Judge Van Brunt of the New York Supreme Court, and his brother, a prominent business man. The brothers had installed burglar alarms connecting the two homes, so that each might assist in watching the other's property.

Judge Van Brunt's family had gone up to the city for the winter. At two o'clock on the morning of December 14th the burglar alarm awoke Mr. I. H. Van Brunt and his son Albert. Upon investigation, the latter saw a dim light flashing about in the Judge's dwelling. He and his father dressed quickly and called Scott, their gardener, and Herman Frank, another employee. All armed themselves with shotguns and pistols.

It was a dark, chilly night, with a drizzling rain. Albert and Scott took their stand at the front door of the Judge's house, while the elder Van Brunt and Frank watched the rear. After a long wait, two men emerged by an outside cellar door at the rear of the house.

"Halt!" cried Van Brunt.

At that, the first man fired a pistol at him but missed. Van Brunt's aim was better, and the charge of buckshot from his gun laid the robber low. The second man turned and ran around the house, but met Albert and Scott, on whom he opened fire. Again the Van Brunt was the better marksman. Albert's second fire killed the marauder almost instantly.

The man first shot was found to be mortally wounded and suffering so much that he begged not to be moved. Whiskey and water were given him and some one asked him who he was.

"I'll tell you the truth," said he. "My name is Joseph Douglas, and that other man is William Mosher." He spelled out the name, "M-o-s-h-e-r." He went on to say that he had forty dollars in his pocket which he had earned honestly, and asked that it be used to bury him. After a pause, he said:

"It's no use concealing it now. Mosher and I stole Charlie Ross from Germantown."

When asked where the boy was, he answered, "Mosher knows all about the child; ask him."

He was told that Mosher was dead.

"God help his poor wife and family!" he ejaculated.

"Can't you tell us where the boy is?" he was asked.

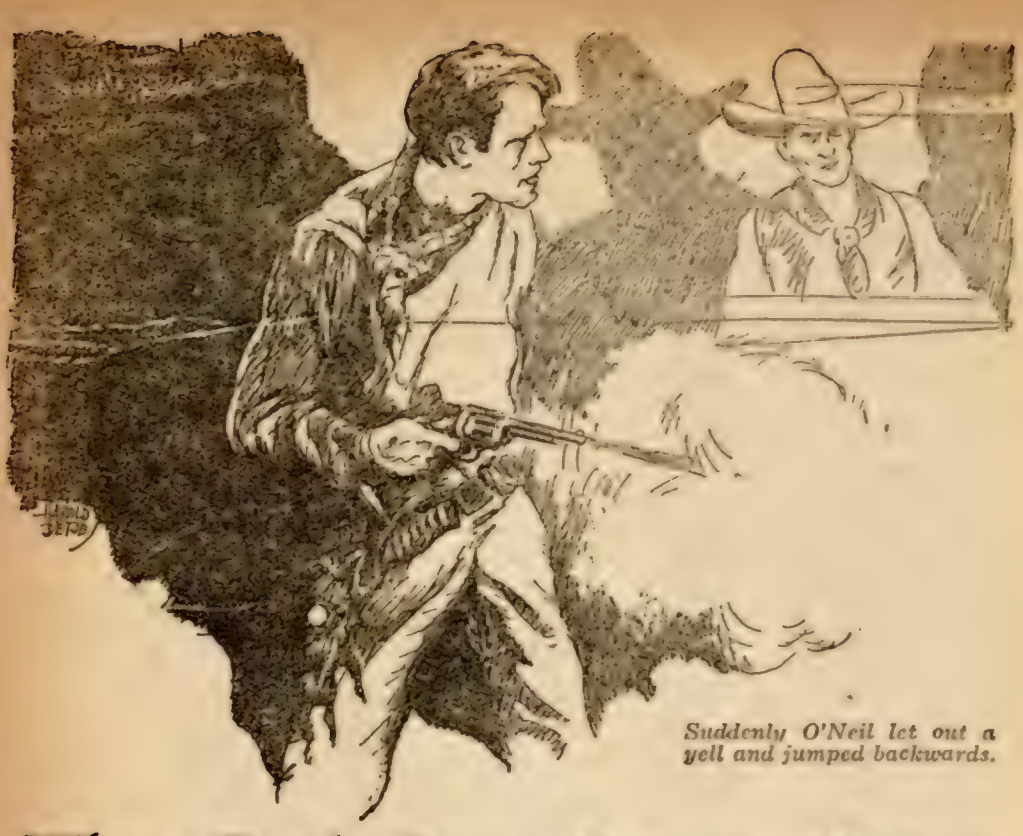
"God knows I tell you the truth," he replied fervently. "I don't know where he is. Mosher knew." He was asked the question two or three times more during the two hours that he lived, but each time declared that he knew not where Charlie was hidden. Just at dawn, he died.

THERE could be no doubt that the two men were Mosher and Douglas. A New York detective who knew them both identified them, as did little Walter Ross. The Ross family were inclined to be elated at first, supposing that the person who had the boy in keeping would now become frightened and release him; but Superintendent Walling and others very quickly saw that the death of the two men would probably make it more difficult than ever to find him. Some questioned whether Charlie had not already been killed; but Westervelt—who subsequently was tried for complicity in the kidnaping and given seven years in prison—confessed that on the night before the burglary with its tragic ending, he had slept in the same room with Douglas in a cheap hotel in New York, and Douglas had then told him that Charlie was alive and well, and that Mosher was trying to figure out a plan for returning him and getting the money simultaneously.

This stimulated the search; but no one had ever had the slightest intimation as to where Charlie was—whether in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, or New York, whether on land or on water. Westervelt swore vehemently that he had never known; and it seems probable that the archvillain, Mosher, had kept this as his secret, and that no one else had known the hiding place save possibly some old crone who had personal charge of the boy.

For months the search went on intensively. When police and detectives gave it up, Ross and his kinspeople continued to run down every rumor. Every little while some one would send word that "Your boy is certainly here." Within two years from the time of Charlie's disappearance, more than three hundred children had been thus reported, including ten from Canada and one each from Cuba, Scotland, and Germany. The boy from Cuba was taken to Philadelphia, and Mr. Ross's nephew went all the way to Scotland to see the boy reported from there, but was compelled to return home disappointed.

AS years went by, older boys and finally men about whom there was some mystery were suspected from time to time of being Charlie Ross. Sometimes they made the claim themselves. But always there was some flaw in their title. Only a year or two ago there died in North Carolina a middle-aged man who was heralded through the newspapers as having probably been the loved and lost one of half a century ago. But in truth, probably the last hope of learning the fate of Charlie Ross vanished when the leaden pellets sealed forever the lips of William Mosher on that December night at Bay Ridge.



Suddenly O'Neil let out a yell and jumped backwards.

The Bad Boy From Bitter Creek

By LUPE LOYA

He shot straight from the hip, and he hit the mark every time. Some said he had the look of a born killer. But some, including Sally Moss, had different views on the subject.

I

"YEH, I understand," said the Old Man impatiently. "I heard it all the first time. Yo're jest a simple-hearted cowhand tryin' to git along, an' folks, especially foremen, persist in misunderstandin' yuh. Yuh didn't start that row up on Bitter Creek, an', anyways, two of the fellers got well. But after that yuh was kind of unpopular, an', bein' of a sensitive, high-strung nature, yuh took to broodin' over it an' neglect-

in' yore work. Lemme see yuh pop that tomato-can off'n the corral fence!"

The command, issued in a sudden staccato bark, seemed to affect Mr. Tulliver strangely. Thrice his prominent Adam's apple rose and fell rapidly, and the pink skin around his tow-lashed, light blue eyes crinkled painfully.

"This here's a quiet district, ain't it?" he countered. "I wasn't aimin' to join up with no militia."

"Lemme see you hit it," persisted the Old Man, with a sardonic grin.

"Up at Vegas one time——"

"Lemme see you hit that can!"

The late terror of Bitter Creek massaged his beardless chin with nervous fingers. He had ridden long and far that day. His digestive apparatus clamored for fuel. His sad-eyed, ratty hill-pony drooped wearily, shoulder muscles twitching off flecks of dried sweat. From the cook-shack rose a tenuous curl of gray smoke, flattening into a wide mushroom against the measureless blue. Beyond the 'dobe ranch buildings—squat, commodious, thick-walled—brown yucca-spiked hills rolled as far as the eye could see. The IXL ranch reeked of peace and prosperity.

Resignedly Mr. Lemuel Tulliver crooked his right elbow.

"I don't see no tomato-can," he sighed.

The Old Man pointed. Distant fifty yards from his gnarled finger a dull rusty gleam marked the once proud container of A-1 Brand Giant Reds, to which a scarlet strip of label still adhered.

"Oh, *that!*" said Lem. "Aw' right."

Once more his gaze swept round that comfortable horizon and out through the pass in the hills where the out-trail dropped over the rim of the world.

"Oh, aw' right," he said.

The forty-five was new—and big. It seemed to the Old Man that it spoke almost before the kid had taken aim. The answer was a metallic click as the recent repository of tomatoes leaped into the air and dropped on the inside of the fence.

"Up at Vegas one time——" began Mr. Tulliver, gently holstering his weapon.

"Never mind Vegas!" said the Old Man, unbraiding his legs from the chair-rungs. "You'll do. I'll take yuh over an' have Al fix yuh up with a snack o' beans. Yo're kinda saggin' in the middle, aintcha?"

THE foreman was fussy about his new fighting man. It irked him that the outfit received the newcomer with varying degrees of skepticism. They listened to his story, as retailed by their superior, with open incredulity. Sure, they needed another man, bad; preferably one handy with his shootin'-iron. But, say! Any time a kid that can't stand sunburn without peelin' too quick comes around with a big talk about havin' bluffed old Canton Davidson up on Bitter Creek, they's somethin' fishy about it! You gotta show me! Stood him up, did he? Made him eat his words! *That* lily!

The extremely blond and retiring Mr. Tulliver was merely tolerated during his first weeks on the IXL. This suited him down to the ground. Peace was what he desired; undiluted peace, and the more of it the better. He was never one of the crowd that stampeded into Chico on payday night; he kept away from the rowdy native *bailes* that were an almost weekly occurrence down at the Anton road ranch; he read the *Youth's Companion* openly, and filed his finger-nails. It was the last named ccurageous action that won him reluctant and tardy respect from the outfit. Not under cover, not slyly nor shamefacedly, as any other man in that hard-bitten bunch would have done it, if moved to do it at all, he actually filed his finger-nails, shaping them into neat and cleanly crescents.

"Look out fer them quiet ones." Nixon, the straw-boss, summed it up. "There's more to him than yuh reckon on—at first sight. I wouldn't wonder if that was purty straight goods he give the Old Man."

AN INCIDENT which occurred shortly thereafter added weight to this opinion. It was a chilly fall evening. O'Neil, the little bow-legged, red-headed Irishman, had decided to make up a fire in the sheet-iron stove. Four of the men were playing cards under the lamp at one end of the bunk-house. Tulliver was seated on the edge of his bunk, removing his boots.

Suddenly O'Neil let out a yell and jumped backward. A four-foot bull snake slithered out of the wood-box and wriggled across the floor, its reared head darting frantically as it sought escape. The players had barely glanced up to see what the trouble was, when the roar of a six-shooter filled the room, followed by a couple of dull flaps as the headless

body of the snake writhed in its death throes. Close to the stove there was a jagged hole in the floor.

"*Madre de Dios!*" exclaimed Monte Pesqueria, clambering to his feet. "He shot from de hip!"

"He shot plumb between my laigs!" O'Neil declared, his monkey-like face ludicrous with mingled astonishment and fright.

Tulliver said nothing, and there was something about his mask-like expression that imposed respectful silence on the crowd. O'Neil, a trifle shaky, proceeded to build the fire; the others went back to their card game; Tulliver went to bed.

But the next day, when he was out of earshot, they discussed the matter in somewhat awed undertones.

"Did you notice his look—after he done it?" Nixon asked. "He's got the face of a born killer, now I'm tellin' yuh."

There had been, indeed, something remarkable in the expression of the recruit from Bitter Creek in the brief interim following his dispatch of the snake and before he dived under his blankets. The color had drained from beneath his pink skin, leaving it gruesomely white; his teeth had been clenched; his shock of bleached hair had stood on end; his eyes, usually pale and inscrutable, had glittered with a strange, uncanny light as he viewed the snake's quivering remains.

"Hell!" he had sighed, but whether this had been an expression of satisfaction or annoyance the crew could not make out. Then he had gingerly pulled his boots up into the bunk, presumably out of the way of prowling reptiles, and had disappeared beneath the blankets.

THE Old Man's gratification grew as he listened to the story. It had been a peaceful enough summer and fall, but trouble lay ahead as inevitably as death and taxes. He was tired of losing an increasing number of cattle each year to Tulio Bell and his gang; more than tired of the supine indifference, not to say cowardice, of Sheriff Soper and his cohorts.

"It's this way," Soper had summed it up in his whining voice during their last interview. "It's a business with Bell; he's organized. It'd mean civil war to try to break him. Now, the way I look at it is this: What he levies from us around here ain't much when yuh think that in return he keeps out small fry like Waco Pete an' the Gunnisons. We have less trouble around here than anywhere along the line, an' you know it."

"Tryin' to make him out a benefactor to the country, are yuh?" had been the Old Man's ireful reply. "Well, me, I ain't goin' to stand fer it no longer! Even if Bell's 'business,' as you call it, wasn't expandin' too quick to suit me, which it is, I'm through!"

"You'll be alone in it," warned Soper. "An' I'll bet the idee o' buckin' Bell ain't popular with that butter-fingered bunch on yore pay-roll now. None of 'em look like they was anxious to commit suicide. You must be countin' heavy on young Tulliver."

"Heard about him?" The Old Man's face had brightened.

"Jest from yore crowd. They 'low he's kinda quick on the trigger."

Bell's terrorism of the district had existed for so long that it had come to be accepted by the majority of the ranchers as a necessary—and lesser—evil. It was better, they reasoned, to pay tribute to him, than to be continually harassed by small marauding bands from north and south of the border, such as kept

less-favored neighborhoods in a state of continual guerilla warfare. He certainly had the range to himself, and his methods were so well known that neither ranchers nor rival rustlers dared to protest, except vocally—and even their vocal unrest was kept discreetly modulated.

A previous incumbent of the sheriff's office, emboldened, it was presumed, by an overdose of *tequila*, had sallied forth to "get" Bell, but as far as was known he was the only native of the district who had exhibited such a deplorable lack of judgment. His riddled body had been found a week later in a side canyon off Acoma Creek. The other casualties had been more or less in the nature of accidents—chance encounters between Bell's men and certain green hands who had either not been duly warned or had taken the warnings lightly, or what had doubtless been regarded by Bell's adherents as "necessary" killings.

Bell rather prided himself on the fact that his business was conducted with a minimum of bloodshed. It was simply a matter of keeping the district free of sharpshooters. Let a rumor reach Bell that somebody in his territory had imported a gunman, unwittingly or otherwise, and he wasted neither time nor words in having the menace removed. Usually a warning sufficed.

THERE were a lot of rumors floating around these days. Tulliver found interest centering in him in a manner that was highly distasteful. He had been on the IXL two months and had a little stake, and his pony was in prime condition. As he carefully filed his nails, he thought the situation over. 'Bout time he was leavin', he reckoned.

Then had come orders from the Old Man to drive the steer herd up to the winter range. Three men were detailed for this job, and Tulliver was informed that he was to remain on the range and watch the cattle. His headquarters were to be at the Moss place on Tuttle Creek. It sounded pleasant enough, so he decided not to quit.

When he met Sally Moss he knew that Fate must have had a hand in the decision. Sally was the sort of girl he hadn't seen in a long time. Somewhere in his not inconsiderable reading he had come across a description that exactly fitted her—a Nut-brown Maid. That was Sally. Curling brown hair, long-lashed brown eyes, clear brown skin with the dusky rose of perfect health shining through. Tulliver found his thoughts drifting into poetical channels whenever she swam into his line of vision.

It was puzzling, not to say disconcerting, to find the Mosses regarding him as something of a hero. He couldn't figure out just wnat they expected of him, but from sundry remarks the elder Moss let drop, he gathered that there was more to the riding range up in the Tuttle country than he had at first supposed. Moss had been shot through the hips and was a semi-cripple, depending on his two half-grown sons for most of the work on his small ranch. His cattle ran with the IXL bunch, and he and the Old Man were friends of many years' standing. Apparently they shared the same views regarding the illegitimate activities of Mr. Tulio Bell.

Tulliver became a little uneasy as he listened to the talk around the Moss base-burner of an evening. There was a tension, an air of expectancy, that suggested momentous events about to take place.

"Jest let 'em try it this year—that's all I ask!" one of the young

Mosses would remark, with a knowing and admiring glance at Tulliver. "Gee! I'd like to be there when that surprise party comes off!"

THE IXL rider felt a little resentful that he had not been fully informed as to what to expect. It seemed to be taken for granted by everybody that he had dedicated himself to some hazardous task, of the nature of which he was but dimly, and uncomfortably, aware.

"Look here," he wanted to say. "If you-all got the notion that I'm goin' to try to run off a bunch of rustlers single-handed, you got another think comin'."

But with Sally's almost deferential eyes upon him he couldn't get the words out. She liked him. What was stranger still, she admired him. She was a reader, and at any other time her small store of books would have filled his heart with contentment. But somehow, now, he didn't care so much for reading. He took to dreaming, instead. He carried the books to his room, but his eyes couldn't seem to get beyond her name scribbled on the fly-leaves. Sally Moss. Sally Moss.

For three weeks nothing happened except a little run-in he had with Emil Ganz, the helper on the Moss place. The consensus of opinion was that if Emil had been endowed with a couple of more brain-cells he could have claimed to be half-witted. He was a big, powerful "hunky," whose muscular development hadn't stopped at the neck.

From the first he had been hostile to Tulliver, sensing, perhaps, with the peculiar intuition of the mentally arrested, the spark of interest that had flashed between the cowboy and Sally. His dog-like devotion to the girl had been of such long standing that when he developed symptoms of jealousy it came as an unpleasant shock.

Sally had met Tulliver on the home trail, and when they reached the corral, Tulliver had started to unsaddle her horse. This, it appeared, was Emil's job. With a growl of rage he had stepped over the log of wood he had been chopping and advanced on the usurper, axe upraised.

Sally's scream had warned Tulliver barely in time for him to duck. Then she had turned on Emil and quelled him with a half-dozen scathing words. He had been like a whipped pup, whining and cringing before her; but after that there had been a venomous look in his eyes as they followed Tulliver.

The incident broke down the barrier of reticence and reserve which had hitherto stood between the stranger from Bitter Creek and the Nut-brown Maid. After it was over they stood regarding each other, laughing a little nervously; but they felt better acquainted, and he, who had been always inarticulate, found himself able to talk with her as he never had with any one else.

"I guess Tully an' Sally is gettin' on real well," Moss Senior remarked to his boys. "He's a nice young feller, durned if he ain't! I wouldn't mind a bit."

"He don't brag none," young Walter had conceded. "But when it comes to that, I guess he'd just as lief they wouldn't be too much said about *some* things he's done."

"You thinkin' o' what Cresslin told us? Well, as I understand it, Tulliver wasn't to blame fer that Bitter Creek mix-up. 'Course we don't know nothin' about him, but he seems like a square-shooter."

"You've said it!" grinned Walter. "That's the best thing he does."

If Tulliver could have overheard

the conversation, he would have plumbed even deeper depths of misery than those in which he had fairly wallowed, at times, since the day he had met Sally Moss. How could he tell her? Sometimes, when his fingers accidentally encountered the big gun on his hip, he felt chilly in the neighborhood of his spine. Would she, or anybody else, believe the plain, unvarnished truth? Who would understand if he should attempt a rational explanation of his exploits with the shiny six-shooter which was always with him, but which he wore as a penitent wears his shirt of thorns?

Cogitating on these matters, he loafed in the saddle on the saucer-like rim of the sheltered mountain valley where the IXL and the Moss cattle fed. He watched the last of a crimson sunset drain from the sky. He could hardly believe that it had been only a little more than three weeks since he had left the home ranch, the IXL; and it was starkly incredible that only a year had passed since he had struck out from his father's home, the parsonage of a little Southern town, to seek adventure in the West! Well, he had found it from the word "Go!" To tote a gun, they had told him, was to court trouble. Yet if it hadn't been for his gun . . .

THE dreamy look suddenly vanished from his eyes. A figure on horseback had emerged from the trees on the opposite rim of the valley. After a moment's surveillance of the scene the newcomer set spurs to his horse and started across the flats at a lope. Tulliver's heart missed a beat or two as he watched. With his eyes still on the advancing horseman, he guided his own mount down the rocky trail from his lookout ledge and cautiously approached the cattle through the thicket of scrub chaparral that skirted the hill.

The two riders came face to face unexpectedly through an opening in the brush. Tulliver grinned relivedly. His visitor was one Arevisto, a Mexican youth who had hung about the IXL during his first days at the ranch. The boy had been riding hard. His horse's flanks were black with sweat, and his own normally chocolate-colored face was pasty gray.

"What's he scared of?" Tulliver wondered as they faced each other.

Arevisto jerked a paper out of his shirt pocket and gingerly handed it to him. Then Tulliver guessed that the impending trouble which had been vaguely in the air of late had broken.

"Turn the cattle over to Visto and ride like hell to the dobe in Tinto Canyon," were the scrawled words under Cresslin's signature that met his eyes. Cresslin was the Old Man, his boss—owner-foreman of the IXL.

The glassy fright in the Mexican's eyes was momentarily reflected in Tulliver's. On several previous occasions he had had that sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, the last time only a few days before when he had caught the glint of Emil Ganz's upraised axe as he dodged from beneath it. A vision of that scene flashed before him, dominated as it had been by the slim, brown-haired girl whose quick courage had cowed the infuriated yokel. Sally! He seemed to feel her brown eyes upon him, those eyes which had not faltered for a second in the face of danger, challenging him to live up to her belief in him.

The panicky desire to take to cover left him. With one long yearning backward glance toward the dimly-defined trail which led over the ridge to the Moss place,

he abandoned the impulse to go to Sally now, to look deeply into her eyes once more before plunging into the fight that lay ahead. For he knew it was to be a fight, with the issue, for him personally, an extremely uncertain quantity. It would take half an hour to reach the Moss place. There wasn't time enough. The boss had said to hurry.

Unconsciously his hand slipped to the gun in his holster as he turned to the Mexican. The youth was visibly trembling, his dull black eyes following the motion in fascinated terror.

"Go to the house over the hill yonder, an' tell 'em you're here," Tulliver ordered curtly. "The kids down there will take turns with you standin' watch to-night."

For the fraction of a second he hesitated, wondering if he dared trust the *paisano* with a message to Sally; then, deciding not to, he gave his horse a touch of the spurs and rode through the gathering shadows toward Tinto Canyon.

II

"WHERE'S that kid o' mine—Tulliver?" asked Cresslin of the IXL as he swung off his horse in the Moss corral. "What time does he generally come in, in the evenin'?"

"Ought to be in any time now," responded Moss, hitching himself across the yard with the aid of a pair of canes. "You want to see him putticular? He comes in fer supper, an' then him an' the boys take turn an' turn on the night shift. Been doin' it fer a week, this bein' the time o' year that Bell——"

"Huh!" exploded the Old Man. "Lot o' good *he'd* do if Bell *should* come around! Say, d'ye know what I jest heard to-day? That kid's skeered o' a gun!"

They had reached the house. Sally was standing in the doorway.

"Who're you talking about?" she demanded, with a smile of greeting to Cresslin. "Not Mr. Tulliver?"

"Shore! Mr. Tulliver!" Cresslin grinned back at her. "Ain't it a caution? I got the story straight to-day from ol' Canton Davidson, when he stopped by at the ranch on his way back from Pantella. You remember me tellin' you that song an' dance Tully give me about Bitter Creek? Well, he didn't exactly tell me no lies, but the way he told it an' the way it happened was two ontirely differunt things. Yes, sir! That kid's skeered o' a gun!

"Seems like what happened was this: Tulliver drifted into the Bitter Creek country last year an' struck Canton fer a job. Bein' short-handed, Canton give him one; but he said it seemed sort o' criminal to do it, seein' as how the kid was so green he didn't know which side o' a horse to climb onto, an' so shy an' diffident that it looked like that tough bunch on the Crazy J would razz him to death.

"'You better let me put that cannon away somewhere fer you,' Canton says he told him when he see that the kid was packin' a man-sized gat. 'It might go off some time when you wasn't lookin'.'

"'I ain't never lookin' when it goes off,' Tully says back to him. 'I can hit without aimin'.'

"Well, ol' Canton had seen a few snap shots in his day, but durn' few, them bein' about as rare as snow in August, an' he didn't believe him. But he let him keep his gun an' turned him loose to get his education. I guess he got it, accordin' to Canton, in large doses. The kid bore up purty well, but his nerves was gettin' frazzled, an' one night

when they was stagin' a rough-house, with him as the roughee, Tully suddenly rips out his gun, drills a hole though a feller's hat, an' shoots out all the lights in the bunk-house.

"It come as a surprise to that bunch o' hellions, but what happened afterward was more o' a surprise. Tully plumb broke down, skeered clean off'n his head from jest the feel o' that forty-five in his hand. He went white as a sheet, an' the cold sweat was pourin' off'n him. The funniest thing was that he started talkin' differunt from what he had before, a sort o' college-professor lingo——"

"I've noticed that," broke in Sally, who was listening with tensely wide-eyed interest. "When he forgets himself, he *does* talk differently. But go on, Mr. Cresslin."

THE Old Man cast a smiling glance of understanding from the girl to her father.

"Anyways," he resumed, "when the crowd found out about Tully's peculiar gift o' bein' able to hit pret' near anything he pointed a gun at, an' yet was skeered stiff o' the very sight o' a gun, they figgered they had somethin' to keep 'em amused all summer. That fight between the Crazy J an' the Bar O outfits in the Golden Star saloon was a frame-up. The night before, when Tully was peacefully slumberin', somebody got his gun an' loaded it with blanks. The next night they enticed him down there on some pretext or other. The Bar O crowd come roarin' inter the place, pretendin' to be thirstin' fer blood.

"Well, in the thick o' the mêlée, Tully started shootin', jest like they hoped he would. Three o' the Bar O men played like they was mortally wounded. Then come the big scene. Tully was cornered, an' he'd run out o' cartridges. The remainin' Bar O men started to close in around him, yellin' that they was goin' to lynch him. Yuh can mebbe imagine how skeered that kid was! But lemme tell you what he done! The barkeep happened to be standin' within a foot or two o' him, an' quick as a cat the kid made a jump an' hauled Mr. Barkeep's gun off'n his hip. Right then an' there things looked differunt. All o' a sudden the joke wasn't on Tully no more.

"Canton says he shore thought there was goin' to be a real killin', so he steps forward an' orders Tully to give up his gun, mutterin' soothin' words an' what not, tryin' to explain that this all ain't so serious as Tully thinks. But the kid gives him a cold an' fishy stare an' orders him to disarm the crowd an' do it quick! Can yuh imagine ol' Davidson takin' orders like that from a raw tenderfoot? I'd like to have been there! Anyways, he done it. There was nothin' else *to* do, if murder was to be prevented. When the guns was stacked in a corner, an' the crowd was standin' there gapin', Tully hands the bar-keep back his weapon, walks out o' the place, an' rides back to the ranch to wait fer the sheriff.

"Well, to save their faces they never told him the real facts. They made out that two o' the Bar O men got well, an' it didn't matter about the third one, anyway. Tully was willin' to give hisself up, but nobody came to get him. But they could see it was kinda preyin' on his mind. He drifted up to Vegas an' back, but after that the outfits around Bitter Creek wasn't none too anxious to have him on their pay-rolls. They didn't know when he might git nervous——"

THE kitchen door burst open. Emil Glanz, breathless, purple-

faced, flung himself into the room.

"Rustlers!" he gasped. "That damn' Tulliver——"

At no time a lucid talker, Emil's excitement rendered him completely incoherent for several moments. Bit by bit they got the story from him: how he had followed Tulliver up to the range—Sally guessed for what purpose—and, secreted in the bushes on a ledge above, had lain watching him; how, just as it was getting dark, a Mexican had ridden into the valley, and Tulliver had gone to meet him. Emil hadn't been able to hear their voices, but he had seen the Mexican hand the cowboy a paper. Then Tulliver had spurred his horse and ridden "like de devil" out of the valley. Emil had clambered to his feet, meaning to run back to the ranch, when all of a sudden he had seen the dim shapes of riders among the cattle. They had worked quickly, cutting out the fattest steers. Then he had known! Bell's men! Tulliver had handed over the cattle to them an' beat it!

You could have heard a pin drop in the silence that filled the room as the big moron stopped for breath before beginning his incredible tale all over again. Sally stood rigid, her fingers grasping the back of a chair so tightly that the knuckles were white and bloodless. The deep rose color had drained from her cheeks, making her eyes seem abnormally large and bright as they flashed from one to another of the incredulous faces around her. The boys, who had come in unnoticed during Emil's recital, were the first to make a move. It was in the direction of the gun-rack.

The dirty yellow pup! He sold us out!" muttered Moss Senior, fumbling for his cane.

The Old Man looked as though he had been sandbagged.

"Emil! Are you telling the truth?"

Sally flung herself in front of the helper with the look that could render the man weak and sniveling. But this time he did not falter. He *was* telling the truth! Suddenly the room seemed to reel around her. She staggered back to her chair.

Cresslin had recovered himself. "Come on!" he said grimly, jerking his head toward the boys as he made for the door. They had seized their rifles, and they followed without a word.

"Planned it all from the beginnin' I bet! Been dickerin' with Bell . . ."

MOSS'S words stabbed into Sally's brain as she rushed across the room and through the door, slamming it behind her. For a moment she stood on the steps, hands clasped across her breast. A pale new moon rode high in the limpid green fan of light that still spread above the western hills. There was a tang of frost in the air, a pungent smell of burning cedar from the saw-mill far down the gulch. Beyond the corral fence, looming black in the shadowy half-light, she could see the figures of Cresslin and the boys saddling their horses.

A feeling of sick despair overwhelmed her as she stumbled across the yard. Last night she and Tully had lingered here, mute in the hushed beauty of the night. They had made a wish on the new moon. And as their eyes had met after the silent communion, each had known what the other's wish had been. Only twenty-four hours ago! And now . . . Tully *couldn't* have sold them out! He might have been putting up a silly bluff with his hard-boiled manner and his attempt to talk like the men of the calling he

had chosen; but he wasn't *that* kind! He couldn't have sold them out!

"What are you going to do?"

Her voice sounded unnatural, off-key. Cresslin's face was an expressionless blur as he looked down at her.

"Sally, m'dear," he said, "I'm goin' out to git Tulliver, if it's the last thing I ever do! We'll have a posse on his trail in an hour."

"Hey, boys!" It was Moss's voice from the kitchen door. He hobbled across the yard.

"Cress, d'ye think these kids had better go along? They ain't nothin' but kids!"

The Old Man snorted. "That's it!" he said harshly. "Allus the way! That's what's the matter with this country! Nobody got the guts to put up a fight with Bell!"

"We're goin' along with yuh, Mr. Cresslin," said Walter Moss quietly. "Yuh know yuh'd be in the saddle yerself right now, Dad, if yuh could! Ever'body's had enough! They'll all come in with us on this."

Only by the grip of his thin old hand on her arm did Sally know the fear that clutched at her father's heart as they watched the boys and Cresslin disappear down the trail.

III

TINTO Canyon was not of itself a place pleasant to venture into alone in the eerie twilight—that is, supposing the visitor to be of a temperament *en rapport* with that mysterious phase of nature which inivests certain spots with personality. The history of Tinto was as black as the malpais rocks that strewed its winding defile and rose in fluted cliffs on either side. Many a human bone bleached among the waving gramma grass and vivid fragile flowers which in spring powdered the banks of the stream under the dappled shadows of old sycamores and white-oaks.

In summer sunlight there was a haunting sadness, a wan beauty, about the canyon which belied its gory past; but on a chill autumn night, with a remote and melancholy sliver of moon standing guard above its sable portals and the hovering stillness broken now and then by the muffled hoot of an owl somewhere in its ominous depths, it was not hard to believe that the unhappy ghosts of those who had met violent ends there assembled in gruesome conclave.

Fortunately for Tulliver, he hadn't been in the district long enough to hear some of the best stories about Tinto; but he knew that it had once been the haunt of outlaws and the battleground of smugglers, and had gazed with curious eyes at the old adobe house wherein the notorious bandit, Felipe Villarme, had taken his last stand. Not one, they said, of Felipe's men or those who pursued them, had lived to tell the tale of that final tragedy. Months afterward what the buzzards and coyotes had left told the wordless story.

Even on a bright sunshiny day the old 'dobe had a dank, detached, and altogether sinister look about it; a mere shell of a house whose three-foot thick mud-brick walls had weathered to blurred slabs, standing gaunt under a crazily sagging roof of *ocatillo* thatch. By daylight its gaping doors and windows suggested the hollow eye-sockets and toothless grin of a senile sinner, unrepentant, awaiting the final Judgment in lonely defiance; but at night the guise of decrepitude seemed to drop from the place like a mantle. It became an alert, actively evil force lurking there in the shadows, spreading its fear-tentacles to seize upon any hopeless human mind

which ventured within the radius of its influence.

Tulliver was from the South. It did not require artificial stimulus to rouse in him a lively sense of unseen presence. He slowed his horse down to a walk as the black walls in front of him narrowed. Any fool could be brave in hot blood, and it was in hot blood that he had ridden pellmell cross-country to this charnal hell-hole. What was Cresslin's idea, anyway, to bottle himself up in here if he was looking for a show-down fight with Bell?

THE dry sand of the creek-bed deadened the horse's footfalls. Under the pale moonlight the sand, in contrast to the dark, block-like rocks on either side of it, glowed with a faintly phosphorescent light. The boy came to a dead halt, suddenly, fearsomely conspicuous on that ribbon of brightness. The stillness, which before had seemed absolute, was now alive with countless tingling sounds as he sat tense and listenin'. And vivid consciousness of stealthy eyes upon him set the skin at the back of his neck puckering into "goose-flesh."

Without thinking, he jerked his beast's head abruptly to the right, forcing the startled animal into the welter of gigantic slabs which had fallen like jack-straws as they sloughed from the cliffs above. The splintered edges of this malpais, or lava, were as sharp as glass. The horse reared back with a protesting grunt, forelegs quivering as it struggled for a foothold.

Tulliver jabbed viciously with his spurs. By daylight neither he nor the horse would have dared that perilous climb. Only a sure-footed trail pony could have negotiated it. Stumbling, slipping, one second down, the next up, it plunged on, until with a crash and a snort it came up against a breast-high barrier, lost its footing, and thudded in a trembling heap into a *cul de sac*.

Tulliver, badly bruised and scraped as the horse went down, thought both his legs must be broken as the animal struggled frantically to its feet. Barely in time he slipped his feet out of the stirrups and pulled himself up in the saddle, falling heavily against the rough rock-face which had brought them to grief. The horse, once more upright, was fairly wedged into the narrow trough. Standing in the saddle, Tulliver took his bearings.

It would be impossible to go on with the horse. Only with careful maneuvering, and by daylight, would it be possible to back the animal out of its narrow prison.

Tulliver sighed, stopping to think for the first time in twenty hectic minutes. This was a sweet predicament! Once more he peered into the canyon, trying to locate the 'dobe. He must be pretty close to it, for before he had left the creek bed he had caught a glimpse of the bare white limbs of the sycamore that grew closely in the little *vega* that surrounded it; now they were cut off from view.

AS HE peered over the rim of the rock, something moved on the faintly bright strip of sand directly below him. One—two horsemen emerged from the shadows. They passed on up the gulch, returning in a few moments. There was a barely discernible murmur of voices as they stood close together; then one of them wheeled and rode silently away in the direction whence Tulliver had come. They seemed to be looking for some one.

With mixed emotions he stared down at the remaining rider. Was it one of his own outfit? The in-

stinct which had sent him scrambling out of sight said "No!" He pulled the scrawled note out of his pocket, could make nothing of it in the dark, twisted it into a wad, and was about to toss it away when he thought better of it, and stuck it back in his pocket.

The horse was trying convulsively to free itself again. Tulliver lost his footing on the heaving saddle, and clung to the rock with fingers and toes until the brute subsided. Did he imagine it, or was the fellow down there looking toward him? For a long moment he stared back at that up-turned face, a small, pale disc in the faint moonlight. Then the rider took up his silent patrol again.

With a sigh of relief Tulliver pulled himself inch by inch up the slippery, sharp surface of the rock, gained the top, and slid to a safer and more comfortable position. There was a gash in his leg where the malpais had cut through his chaps when the horse went down. His hands were warm and sticky with blood. Sweat was pouring off his forehead into his eyes, and his muscles, suddenly free of tension, were quivering weakly. Resting long enough to get a grip on himself, he managed by slow and painful degrees to reach a point which he judged to be directly above the 'dobe, and from which he had a fair view up and down the gulch.

THINGS were happening quickly. A faint light emerged from the house, moving jerkily among the grotesque shadows of legs and arms as men took up their posts here and there in the clearing. A small fire sprang up near the fence inside the big, tumble-down corral. Suddenly its meaning dawned on Tulliver. Those pounding hoofs were not of horses, but of cattle—stolen cattle! This, then, was why Cresslin had ordered him to ride like hell to Tinto! But where was the Old Man and the rest of the crowd?

Like a murky stream the rustled steers poured down the narrow gulch—about fifty head, Tulliver judged. A cloud of dust rose, blotting out the scene as the animals were run into the corral, but he could tell by the sounds—subdued shouts, the shrill bawling of frightened and agonized yearlings—what was happening. With the dust rose the sickly stench of singeing hair and seared flesh. They were losing no time in "burning" the brands of their night's catch.

He could see their game now. Using the facilities of the deserted ranch for the first step in their nefarious program, they would drive the steers by degrees through the series of canyons of which Tinto was one, to their meeting place in the wild, well-nigh impassable country into which the sluggish current of the Rio Grande cut its zigzag course. Mexico was their destination. Mexico, where plenty of American buyers of their own ilk waxed fat in the rich pasturage of the high Sierra Madre, and where no questions were asked when their fine pilfered stock found its way in the spring of the southern *haciendas*.

Forgetful of caution, Tulliver let himself down off his slab into a nest of rocks closer to the chaotic scene below. He expected any moment that the ambushed IXL crowd would open fire, for he was sure now that the Old Man had somehow got a tip on Bell's plans and meant to surround the rustlers. Lucky for him, Tulliver, that he had had that hunch to get off the trail! Like a race horse quivering and taut behind the starting tape, he waited for the first

flash of gun-fire, for he knew when the six-shooters got to talking his own would enter the argument in no uncertain tones.

Suddenly in the dust below a forty-five blazed, its roar reverberating against the cliffs. As a matter of fact, it was a mercy shot administered to end the annoying convulsions of a steer which had broken its leg as it plunged under the rope. Tulliver didn't know that; he didn't know anything for the next fifteen minutes. The shot had electrified him, rendered him *berserk* as he had been on that never-to-be-forgotten night in the Golden Star. The last things he remembered clearly were the silhouette of a man against the fire light, and the feel of his trigger-finger against cold metal as he leaned over the edge of the parapet and let go.

AFTERWARD, as Cresslin and the posse reconstructed the events of the night, they decided that Bell and Soper must have been killed outright, and that the Mexican, Arevisto, and the other casualty had been wounded and trampled by the milling cattle. With their leader dead, and believing themselves trapped, the remaining bravos had evidently high-tailed it for points south, counting not upon the order of their going.

Next to the surprise of finding Tulliver still alive at the bottom of the rocks behind the house, despite a hole in his shoulder, where some lucky pot shot had found its mark, a broken leg and a gash in his head which the Old Man declared would have killed a sane man, was the discovery of Soper's body. But they didn't stop to discuss the intriguing fact of their late sheriff's presence at that evening's surprise party. The blood-stained note in Tulliver's pocket told them as much as they needed to know as to how *he* happened to be there, and the boy from Bitter Creek was their chief concern now.

His first words when he came to, in a white bed in the Moss ranch-house, which under other circumstances would have been comfortable, were of his horse; and when it became plain that his delirious ravings would not cease until some one had been sent to rescue that unfortunate animal from his prison in the Tinto malpais, the Moss boys were sent to fetch it.

Some twenty-four hours after Doc Bright from Chico had pronounced the patient fairly out of danger, he became dimly aware of the fact that the ministering angel who occasionally bent to smooth his pillows or ease his bandaged shoulder was Sally. Through all his wanderings in that vaguely troubled Never-Never Land into which he had ventured, and from which he had come perilously near not returning, the wraith of Sally had been always just ahead of him, just out of reach; beckoning, cajoling; fading from his grasp as his yearning arms closed about her.

This was no dream girl! She turned suddenly to find his eyes upon her, clear now, fully conscious. And the look that came into hers was the sort that can transform the world for a man when he sees it in the right woman's eyes. An immense, transcendent peace enwrapped Tulliver. He grinned weakly, struggling for words which had been eluding him since that first day—words to explain that he was really no hero, but, as the Old Man had said, "jest a simple-hearted cowhand—with a funny complex." It would be a long story, but he made a valiant effort.

"Up at Vegas one time——"

And that was as far as he got, for Sally Moss bent down and kissed him on the lips.

Spontaneous Human Combustion

By ALFRED F. HARRIS

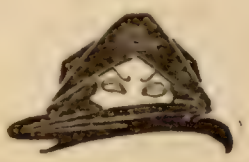
READERS of Dickens will recall the horrifying picture drawn in "Bleak House" of the death of Krook, the old ragman, by a mysterious agency which the author calls spontaneous combustion. At the time that "Bleak House" was written, the possibility of such a happening was affirmed by many English, French, and other scientists.

Dickens, in his preface, quotes a French investigator, Le Chat, and others in support of his story. The theory was that it happened only to hard drinkers; that when a man became thoroughly rum-soaked, some day he was likely to burst into flame and be consumed to a mass of black, greasy soot. When *Mr. Guppy*, in Bleak House, touched it, he cried out in horror that it was like black fat.

Objectors pointed out that it is impossible for flesh to burn, as it is largely water; but the believers replied that the tissues of an habitual drinker become so saturated with alcohol that it fairly replaces the water, and so becomes inflammable. Later investigators, such as M. Devergie, abandoned the idea of actual "spontaneous combustion," but declared that the body of such a person would instantly ignite if touched by a candle flame or hot coal, whereas other bodies would be difficult to burn, and usually the bones would be left.

Other authorities agreed with Devergie that the body burned with an inextinguishable blue flame, and was reduced to fatty soot; also that the flame, though on the mass of flesh and bone, usually spared inflammable substances in the vicinity. Devergie claimed to have personal knowledge of a case where complete incineration of a body had occurred in a wooden room five by six feet and not only the woodwork but even two muslin curtains at the windows had been untouched by the fire.

Devergie asserted that combustion happened more often to women, and especially to old women, than to men. About 1850 a list of nineteen supposedly authentic instances of such combustion was compiled from the French *Dictionnaire de Médecine*.



"Ah, let me go!" cried Kennedy. "I must go to her."

The Return of Sibella

By SYLVIA STEVENSON

Do you believe—as did Doctor Thor—that a thought can be so vivid that it assumes a visible form? Do you believe that the soul of a woman, through the medium of her great love for a man, could leave her living body and make way for the soul of a girl long dead? Michael Kennedy loved his wife, but even more dearly did he love the shadow-girl of the dew-pond. Which one was saved for him?

"I WAS up in town for the day, and I happened to hear two men at the Club talking about you, saying you'd done some wonderful cures, in queer cases."

"Queer my cases may be," smiled Doctor Thor, "but I should never describe myself as having 'cured' them. Rather, I try to explain—to dissolve conflicts—act as intermediary between different worlds."

He glanced at the young man's card, whereon was written:

MR. MICHAEL KENNEDY
Underdown Farm, nr. Devizes

"You think I may be of more use to you than an ordinary medical man, Mr. Kennedy?"

"I—I don't know. I walked up and down outside your house for half an hour, trying to make up my mind. Then I said to myself that if you happened to be in and free—I had no appointment—I would ask you to see me. If not, I would go away."

"Well, I was in, as you see. In another five minutes you would have missed me."

"Then it must mean you can help me!" The young man leaned forward eagerly.

"Perhaps—if you will tell me what is troubling you. Tell me as

much or as little as you like, and take your time."

DOCTOR THOR'S measured voice was in sharp contrast to the hurried, breathless manner of his visitor. He knew, none better, the power of the human voice to stabilize emotion, to calm and soothe a nerve-racked patient. Knew, too, that the surroundings also must be toned to the key of calmness, reflection, balance. That was why the walls of his consulting-room were neutral-tinted, the upholstery of silver-gray leather, the lighting falling softly from a silvery, inverted bowl of alabaster. The whole room was an oasis of calm after the hurrying streets outside. Peace radiated from the very air, and the Doctor himself, seated so quietly at his desk, was the focus of it. But in his face, that thin, brown face with the deep-seeing gray-blue eyes, was not only peace, but the knowledge of an inward power. Asylum nurses, in the days before he had abandoned his practice as a rising nerve specialist to devote himself to psychic investigation, had been wont to say that one glance of Doctor Thor's was sufficient to calm a patient in the wildest throes of dementia.

It was so now, with this obviously sane but desperately overwrought young visitor. At first he began to detail various symptoms in a nervous, disconnected way—that he could not sleep, that he found himself entertaining queer fancies, seeing visions. But before he had got far Doctor Thor interrupted him gently.

"I can see that your nerves are in a bad state—I should guess that you are not sleeping. What you are going to tell me is—why?"

A moment longer the young man hesitated. Then he threw back his dark head in a gesture of desperation.

"Doctor, they say you can lay ghosts. But can you lay the memory of them? Can you make me forget what I've seen?"

The Doctor studied him for a moment, under cover of a lifted hand. Very young he seemed at first sight, tall and powerfully built, good-looking in a dark, clean-cut way, probably the product of public school and university, certainly keen on games—his shoulders showed a breadth that might denote a rowing man. Not at all the sort of subject who might have been expected to "see ghosts." But Doctor Thor knew from experience that psychic sensitiveness might lurk, and often did, beneath the most apparently unlikely exterior. And certainly this youth had something on his mind—some dread, some burden of concealment, that was causing unnatural lines of repression about his mouth.

"Ghosts, my dear fellow, are of so many kinds. Cannot you tell me more?"

Kennedy emitted a sound that might have been a laugh.

"I—it all sounds so crazy—I feel such a fool, talking about it. That's one reason why I can't tell my wife about it."

"Your wife? You are married, then?"

"Yes. Oh, yes. We've been married two years, ever since I started with the farm. Mary's an awfully hard worker, too! It's just as well. It's very lonely down there—she sees so few friends."

HE seemed to welcome the side issue, like a patient who, faced with the surgeon, knife in hand, babbles of his falling hair or rising handicap at golf. But Doctor Thor led him back.

"What is it you can't tell her about?"

There was a pause. Then, surprisingly, Kennedy pulled out of an inner pocket a small book. Keeping his hand upon it, as if loath to let it go for a moment, he showed it to the doctor.

"I've never told her about this, for one thing."

It was a little flat book, covered in faded green satin, worked with yellowish silk roses that had once been pink. Opening it, Kennedy pointed to the name, worked likewise in silk, on the inside of the cover: "Sibella Lathom," and the date, "January, 1835."

"I found it by chance one day, soon after we moved in, when I was rummaging up in one of the lofts. It was in an old box among the lumber up there—about the one spot Mary didn't think of turning out, when we took over the farm."

"But then this book——?"

"The diary of Sibella Lathom. It had lain there all those years, till I found it. I knew the house was old—used to be Underdown Manor, before it degenerated into simply a farm—but I'd never heard the name of Lathom. I thought how interested Mary would be when I showed it to her. She was out then, busy with her chickens or something, as usual. So I stuffed it into my pocket, so's to remember it——" He broke off, fingering the satin cover tenderly.

"That afternoon I went with one of the shepherds up on the downs, to give a hand with the lambing. It was pretty late before we finished, about nine o'clock when I set out for home alone. I took what I thought was the right path—you know how alike these grass paths can be when it's dark, and the moon had only just risen. I followed it along a high ridge till I came to a clump of trees, growing in a circle, and water—I could just see the shining of it—in the middle. Then I knew I was out of my road, and that this was one of the dew-ponds you come upon up there. Funny deep pools, with no springs. They say the Romans made them."

"I know," said Doctor Thor. "I have seen one in Africa, on the very top of a mountain. They made them always in a high, bare spot. The trees around yours must have been planted later."

"Well—I didn't stop to look at it then. I was just turning away when I saw—I saw a girl running between the trees towards the water."

HE looked around quickly, to see if Doctor Thor were laughing at him. But the doctor's gray eyes were serious and intent.

"And then——?"

"Then, just as she reached the edge of the pool, she stopped and looked around. From where I stood I could see her face, turned towards me. Somehow I felt I'd seen it before. Just a girl, and she looked—desperate. I thought somebody must be chasing her, and I swung around to see who it was. I remember wondering why I didn't hear footsteps, cries—anything. And then I saw what she was looking at—a little way off, he was—a man on a horse, a great hulking brute with an evil face, and a whip in his hand——"

He clenched his own hands as he spoke, and Doctor Thor saw his powerful shoulder-muscles jerk.

"I jumped forward, got between him and the girl. I called out to her: 'Get behind me!' But she still stood there, on her face that look—hunted—a cry for help, if ever there was one, though her lips never moved. And then, all in a second, she turned again and sprang into the pool."

The young man put an unsteady hand on his forehead.

"That's all. She disappeared—the man disappeared. There was no splash, no sound. I realized I'd seen a ghost — something that wasn't human. And next time——"

HIS tone was full of such deep sadness that Doctor Thor glanced at him sharply.

"You have seen the same thing again?"

"Many times," muttered Kennedy. "It—she comes always on the same sort of night, soon after moon-rise, when there's no mist, only wind and clouds."

"Then I can tell you one thing —it was no 'ghost' you saw."

"Then what?"

"It was a thought form. Have you never heard that a thought can be so vivid, so charged with emotion, that it assumes a visible form, and can be seen by any one with even slight psychic powers—long after the person who thought it is dead?"

"But I don't understand." His bewilderment was pitiful. "She moves, she looks around, she throws herself into the water, night after night, and nobody can help her—not even I!"

"No, no," Doctor Thor comforted him. "You must not think that! She does not suffer — *she* is not there. Her soul, her ego—call it what you will—is elsewhere. It is only her thought that lives on in that place—a shadow, an image, like a cinema film. So many 'ghosts' are only that!"

He spoke soothingly, as to a child, and for a moment the visitor seemed to be struck with the explanation. Then his brows met in a frown, and he shook his head.

"That isn't all. It can't be! These last few times — Sibella has seen me!"

"Sibella?" queried the other sharply.

"Of course. Oh, but—" He caught himself up. "I haven't told you. When I found this diary, I found something else. There was a little picture inside the flap of the cover —a painting on silk—a portrait of the writer. As soon as the girl of the dew-pond had disappeared, I realized where I had seen her face before. It was the face of the painting—of Sibella Lathom."

THE Doctor scanned his young visitor, sitting there clutching his faded green book.

"You think she has seen you?"

"I'm sure of it! But—I can't explain—you'd have to see for yourself." Suddenly he leaned forward tensely. "I believe you *could* see her. Will you? Will you come—and help her, if you can? Come back with me to-night! There'll be a full moon, and there's no mist."

In his eagerness he had forgotten the strangeness of his request. Why should his voice tremble, his hands clench, at the thought of the suffering of a ghost, a stranger? But Doctor Thor knew too well the note of urgency in any appeal to doubt it here. He saw that this man was in great spiritual need of some sort, and, whether he could help or no, it was his business to try. He made a rapid calculation and found that he had made no important appointment for the next day.

"Very well, I'll come," he said. "But remember—I can promise nothing."

"As long as you'll come!" cried Kennedy.

THEY traveled down to Devizes on the fastest train available, but even so the short winter day was drawing in when they arrived. A Ford met them, driven by a burly,

thick-set man whom Kennedy introduced as Hunnet, and who spoke in a heavy Wiltshire drawl.

"Missis Kennedy said as I were to say she were sorry not to come to station, but her 'ead was too mortal bad."

It struck Doctor Thor that there was a certain surliness in his tone, as if he blamed Kennedy for his wife's indisposition.

"Headache, has she?" Kennedy repeated as they drove off. "That's something new, for Mary. She's as strong as a horse, never sick or sorry. It can't be anything much."

He relapsed into the silence he had maintained almost throughout the journey. Only as they drove through the farm gates, he said urgently:

"You quite understand that I've told my wife nothing of all this? You see, I—I don't want to frighten her. She always was terrified of that sort of thing. Always says a ghost is about the only thing that *could* scare her."

"I quite understand," Doctor Thor promised him.

UNDERDOWN FARM stood off the main road, at the end of a rough track between sparse trees. Lonely it certainly was, with the down looming over it—any one might have felt isolated here. Yet it bore traces of its old and better days, the front entrance being almost imposing with its battered stone lions on either side of the porch. The room into which Kennedy ushered the doctor was homely enough, however, plainly furnished, obviously the living-room of two busy people, neither of them having time for gewgaws, vases, embroidered cushions, and the like. There was an old-fashioned settle by the hearth, from which a rosy-cheeked young woman rose to greet them.

"This is Doctor Thor, Mary," said Kennedy, kissing her quickly. "A—a friend of mine. I asked him to come down and look us up—said, of course, we'd put him up for the night."

"Of course," echoed the girl.

Her voice was slightly husky, as if it hurt her a little to speak. She had curly brown hair, growing low on her forehead, brown eyes and capable, sun-browned hands. A pleasant face it was, full of good sense and sanity and purpose. Any one could see that she was used to "managing" her big husband in all matters of everyday life, and that she did it so well and so beautifully that he had never thought of objecting. Doctor Thor liked at once her rather large, generous mouth, her air of forthrightness and honesty.

"I'm very glad, Michael!" She turned to the visitor. "My husband sees so few people down here. I'm sometimes afraid he misses his old friends."

"There are compensations, surely," smiled the Doctor. "This pure air, for instance."

"Of course we love it, really," she said quickly, glancing at her husband. "But it's nice to see a new face."

She turned away, with the excuse that she must see about the visitor's room.

"Head not too bad, Mary? Hunnet said you were feeling off-color."

"Oh, it's nothing," she assured him. "Only a cold coming on, I think. It'll be gone to-morrow."

When she had gone out, Kennedy went to the window, pulling the blinds back.

"Driving clouds about, but no fog. The moon doesn't rise till ten o'clock——"

THAT evening meal would have been a strange experience for a guest less accustomed to psycho-

logical disturbances than was Doctor Thor. Neither his host nor his hostess ate anything, though they made a show of doing so. From time to time Kennedy kept glancing, as if involuntarily, toward the windows. At these moments his wife would fix her eyes on him—and Doctor Thor felt certain, incongruous as it seemed in a person of her independent character, that there was a wistful look in them. So occupied was she in watching her husband that she had no notion that the visitor, in his turn, was observing her.

Kennedy, the pretense of a meal being ended, remarked with a labored casualness: "It's a fine night. I've got to go out and see to those calves, Mary. Would you care to come along, Doctor Thor?"

"Oh, must you, Michael? Can't Hunnet——" began his wife. Then she bit her lip, restrained herself with an obvious effort. "Of course, if you think you'd better go yourself——"

"I must," said Kennedy doggedly, but he did not look at her as he said it.

"Oh, well." She shrugged her shapely shoulders with an affectation of lightness. "I'll go to bed early, then. You two will have plenty to talk about, anyway. I should only be in the way!"

But as they went out, Doctor Thor caught a glimpse of her face, and it was the face of a woman whose soul is in torment. What was it that Mary Kennedy suspected?

THE way led along the topmost ridge of the downs, skirting the queer humps of the barrows, crossing here and there a hoof-marked, grassy ride. Kennedy, carrying a lantern, forged steadily ahead till they came in sight of the circle of trees that he had described. Here he extinguished the lantern.

"We shan't need it any longer," he whispered. "There'll be light enough from the moon."

Quickly they made their way through the trees to the edge of the pool. The moon kept dipping behind clouds, plunging the scene alternately into darkness and into wavering light, as it shone between the bare twigs. Doctor Thor could feel the slight tremblings of the young man's body beside him. They stood silently, as though in a church. Suddenly Kennedy seized the doctor's arm in a grip that bruised.

"There!" he breathed. "There—can you see her?"

Following his pointing finger, Doctor Thor at first saw nothing but a shaft of moonlight. Then, as his supernormal vision strengthened, he saw what the other saw—a girl's slim figure, running swiftly, head back, as if in an extremity of terror.

He too, as Kennedy had done, looked instinctively behind her for a pursuer—and saw a man on horseback, a towering figure, riding wildly, a hunting crop in his raised hand. He had not time to note the details of his appearance, though it seemed that his dress was not modern—knee breeches and flapping coat-tails, a high frilled stock. But his face was very clear, and Kennedy's word for it—"evil"—had been the right one. It was smiling slightly, the full-lipped mouth drawn back, the eyes alight with a savage lust, a lewd anticipation. "I'm coming," said those eyes. "You can't escape me—you're mine!"

Kennedy's convulsive grasp on his arm tightened, and he turned again. The girl had paused on the very edge of the pool, and her head was turned, looking back. Seeing

her face for the first time, Doctor Thor had a feeling that he had seen it before—the brown hair curling low on the forehead, the wide, brown eyes set far apart, the generous mouth. But he had no time to think where.

They stood directly in the line of her vision, and a human being could scarcely have failed to see them. This girl, obviously, did not. She appealed to an empty sky, with the desperate, only half-conscious appeal of a young girl from the wanton cruelty of fate. In it was gathered up all her regret for the sweetness, the joys, of life, which she had scarcely tasted, and, above all, for the lover—the comrade, the pure of soul—whom she had never met. Between the unknown dark of death and the known terror of life she stood there, and in her eyes was reflected the vision of her fear, the gross and sensual man—inescapable except by that one way, that leap into the dark.

So vividly could Doctor Thor imagine the cry for help proceeding from her half-open lips that he could well understand the violent jerk forward of his companion. Terrible indeed it must be, to believe that a conscious spirit was there, going through the same agony night after night—to watch it, and be unable to help.

"I tell you, she isn't there—nobody's there. It's only a thought-film unrolling—nothing alive."

But Kennedy paid no heed.

"Look—look at her now!"

INTO the girl's face a change had come, subtle but unmistakable. She had become—was gradually becoming—*aware*. Instead of looking through them, she was now looking at them, or rather at Kennedy. The position of her head had not changed, but the ghastly fear had died from her eyes, given way to a glorious relief. She began, unbelievably, to smile.

"Ah, let me go!" cried Kennedy. "I must go to her!"

But in that second, as he was straining in the doctor's hold, yet another change occurred. In a flash, Sibella's face became once more a mask of terror. Instantaneously she turned, sprang far out into the pool, and—vanished.

THEN, and only then, did Kennedy's struggling to free himself cease. The whole incident, from Sibella's original appearance to her leap into the pool, had taken but an instant of time as we know it, yet in that instant the young man had expended so much nervous force that he had exhausted himself. He collapsed now, leaning against a tree trunk, his head in his hands.

"You see how it is, now," he muttered at last.

"I see—that you have brought a spirit back from the other side. What was only a thought form became, for a moment, something else—because of you, and your strong desire to help her."

"Because I love her!" Kennedy cried recklessly. "Because she's the girl I ought to have married! Oh, I know I ought to be ashamed because of Mary——"

"Mary," repeated the Doctor, suddenly realizing of whom the spirit girl had reminded him. "Why, that's who she's like—her face is like your wife's!"

"You noticed that, too, did you?" Kennedy glanced at him. "Yes, she is rather like Mary—to look at. Perhaps that's partly what attracted me to her the first time. She's like Mary in appearance, but in everything else she's as different as that willow tree there is from an oak!"

He pointed to a slender, drooping

sapling that leaned over the pool, and then to a sturdy young oak, shooting up, unsupported, toward the sky.

"How do you know? You've never spoken to her."

"You forget—I have her diary."

"Ah!" mused the doctor. "And it was in your pocket that first time!" Here was an explanation, he knew, of the fact that Kennedy and no other had seen this vision of the writer.

"When she began to see me," Kennedy was muttering, "I thought I'd be able to comfort her—that she wouldn't have to go through it all again. But she does, just the same. It's only for a minute that she sees me!"

"IT'S only for a minute," corrected the other, "that you see her."

"You mean——?" Kennedy started at him.

"That she comes back, possibly, at other times, when you cannot see her? Yes, I mean just that. Perhaps—one cannot tell for certain—perhaps she has become 'earth-bound' again. You may have dragged her back by your strong desire—back to this world from her own."

"Then I've made her unhappy, after all—more unhappy than she was before?" His distress was pitiful. "No!" he cried suddenly. "It can't be so. She's happy, she smiles at me."

"For a moment, on a moonlight night. But where will that lead her? What can you be to her, in this life—or she to you?"

At that Kennedy hung his head.

"You're right, I suppose. But—what am I to do, then?"

The Doctor hesitated, looking at the young man standing there with bowed head in the checkered moonlight. So hard it was to know how to give counsel for the best to each separate soul in trouble, with its individual needs, its individual reactions. Then he said:

"Leave her alone—let her go back to her peace—forget her, if you can. Think of your wife, who's devoted to you."

"Mary!" sighed Kennedy. "Do you think I don't think of her—don't feel a cad? It isn't as if I didn't love her, too, even now, in a way—but I'm torn in two. I've tried—you can't think how hard I've tried—not to let her find out this, not to let it worry her."

"And are you sure you've succeeded?"

"Sure! She doesn't guess—how could she? You are the only person I've told." He looked out over the dew-pond, still and mysterious, without a ripple in the faint white light. "But Sibella—she's such a *little* girl—so helpless! She never had a chance. If only I'd been there in time!" He added: "Do you know, just now—for a moment—I felt I wanted to throw myself in after her?"

"I know." The Doctor nodded. "That was the reflection of her violent emotion. You felt what she felt, all those years ago. That's why for your own sake, if for no other reason, you must leave her alone."

"Perhaps," Kennedy murmured, "it would have been better if I had done it—better for every one!"

THAT night, after his host had retired, Doctor Thor sat up reading the diary of Sibella Lathom. Kennedy had pressed it into his hands with a muttered, "I'd like you to read it. Perhaps you'll understand better."

Opening the little book with the faded green cover, he inhaled the faint fragrance of rose petals. As

he turned the pages, very carefully so as not to tear the age-brittled paper, the fragrance followed him, haunting, insistent because of its very faintness.

It was the diary of a child, beginning on her fifteenth birthday. The first part was full of the small daily doings of a country squire's daughter—the meet of foxhounds in the village, the death of her spaniel, "Topsy," after which she had cried for a week, the clutch of wild hawks' eggs that she and Nurse had found on the downs, the great thunderstorm that had so frightened her.

> Papa called me a "born simpleton," and I ran from him.

Motherless she was, it seemed, and her fear of her father was apparent at every mention of him. Often he was away for long periods, "among his fine friends," presumably in London. But on the rare occasions when he was at the Manor, she avoided him as far as possible. Doctor Thor pictured a violent-tempered, headstrong man, striking terror by his very presence into the heart of a girl with her sweet, clinging, timid nature.

Left much alone, she indulged in the dreams natural to her age. On one page there was even a word-picture of her ideal lover, the lover who lurks in the dim consciousness of every young girl, for whose coming she waits with hope unconfessed and a delicious fear.

> He will be dark, tall, and very strong —a broad man, like Thomas, the under-groom. And he will have blue eyes, not like my brown ones, which I cannot abide the color of.

This was the lover for whom Sibella had waited—and might not the description have fitted young Kennedy well enough? Doctor Thor was not surprised that the diary opened by itself at that page.

Then, toward the end of the diary, came the first mention of the menace that was to destroy her.

> To-day Papa brought home a great gentleman from London, to stay with us. Nurse says there is talk among the servants that he did Papa a service, lent him much money that he lost at cards, but I do not know the truth of this. I was bidden to show him the rose garden. He smiles often at me, but I do not smile. I am afraid of him—but that is silly, there is no reason!

And, a few days later, without warning, the cloud broke.

> Papa has told me that this gentleman, Sir Harry Wilmington, has asked for me in marriage, and that he desires me to accept him. I did not dare tell Papa it was impossible. But I cannot —I cannot!

From that day onward, the battle was sharp but short. They were two men, agreed upon her fate—the one who grossly desired her, the other who was prepared, for value received, to sell her. She had no mother, only the nurse, who was probably as terrified of the master as she was herself. What could Sibella do against such powerful forces arrayed in league?

> To-day he put his arm round me and kissed my cheek, and I felt as if a snake had touched me. He is cold and cruel, like a snake. He comes closer and closer—I run from him, but I cannot escape. I see him always in my dreams, and he smiles at me. Yesterday I saw him beating his horse on the head, and he was laughing.

The rest was blurred, as if with tears. So it was that vision of the man, savagely beating his horse, that she had carried in her mind in that last moment, by the pool!

On the last page there was a single entry, in a shaking, childish hand.

> To-morrow I am to be married to Sir Harry Wilmington in Devizes, and go away with him to London. I have only to-night—they will not watch me to-

night, they have been drinking since dinner-time. If I can get away, on the downs, there is the dew-pond—they say it has no bottom. I am afraid—so afraid I cannot hold the pen—but I fear Sir Harry more. Why isn't there any one to save me, even now, before it is too late?

There followed a kind of testament, pitiably short.

My green beads I leave to Nurse, and the new sarsenet dress.

That was the end of Sibella's diary. Doctor Thor sat still for a long time with it in his hand, looking into the dying fire. Then, turning it over tenderly, he drew out from under a flap in the cover the little portrait on silk. There was the face again—so like Mary Kennedy's, yet with an expression so different in the great brown eyes. This girl called always, by her very weakness, for help and protection—whereas the other gave it, from her own strength. And to a nature like young Kennedy's, the appeal of weakness was too strong to be ignored.

Why isn't he here, my lover—the one I dreamed of—to save me even now, before it's too late?

That was the cry of the spirit Sibella, and that was the cry that had torn the young man's heart, had made him forget Mary, his wife, whom he loved, and live only for the moments after moon-rise on a wind-swept down.

SADLY Doctor Thor laid down the little green book. This was a case in which nothing could be done—nothing but give the advice he had already given. "Forget!" It was easy enough to say, but was it so easy to do? There were times even now, after nearly twenty years, when he himself remembered only too clearly. Remembered a girl—a young girl, no older than the girl of the dew-pond, but with a tongue that could pierce more sharply than any sword. When she had married another man, although he had gone right out of her life, he had not found forgetting possible.

Kennedy's love, however, was not a thing of flesh and blood. The Doctor decided that he would talk once more with the young man, before he left, and if possible exact a promise from him not to visit the dew-pond again.

BUT Kennedy, next morning, had another trouble.

"My wife," he said; "she's ill, I'm afraid. She kept talking in her sleep. I'm sure she's feverish. She says it's nothing, but I wish you'd go up and see her, Doctor."

Half an hour later the two men faced each other outside her closed door.

"It's pneumonia."

"Pneumonia?"

"Yes. Acute, I'm afraid. We shall want a nurse. Have you got a telephone?"

He spoke more brusquely than he had intended, and he was sorry when he saw the young man's obvious distress.

"But how on earth did she get it? She's always been so strong!"

"I think——" began the Doctor. He wanted to say: "I think she caught a chill, walking about the downs on bitter cold nights, waiting for you," but instead he said: "That doesn't matter now. What we've got to do is to get her well again."

"You'll stay, then? You won't leave us?"

His anxiety, his fear of presuming on the other's good nature, were pathetically obvious.

"I'll stay till we see how she's getting on," promised Doctor Thor, after a moment's hesitation.

Many times during the day which followed he had occasion to be glad

of his decision. His practice in town would not suffer unduly—there were no specially urgent cases on hand, and he had wired instructions to his secretary to explain his temporary absence. On the other hand, these two needed him to an extent which, in the wife's case at least, he had not suspected. She seemed to have become in a moment weak and fragile, in spite of her rosy face. Whenever he went up to her room he would find her lying with her large, feverish-bright eyes fixed on the doorway.

"What's Michael doing? Tell him I'm all right—don't let him worry!"

And when Michael came and sat beside her, dumbly, her hand in his: "Doctor Thor is taking such good care of me! He treats me just like a baby."

"That's what we all are, when we're ill," said the Doctor.

"What—you, Mary?" Michael said. "You, who are always looking after other people?"

He looked down on her. Then swiftly, awkwardly, he kissed her hand and went out of the room.

"Why," thought Doctor Thor, watching her face—"why didn't he kiss her lips, instead?"

TOWARD evening, when the nurse had arrived, she became delirious, with conscious intervals. In one of these she kept turning her head toward the window, having begged that the curtains should be drawn back.

"It's fine again," she whispered hoarsely. "There'll be a moon."

Doctor Thor looked at her for a moment.

"Yes," he said gently. "But he won't be going out—to-night. So you needn't worry."

He saw her flushed face whiten under the eyes.

"Then you know——?"

"I know you've been breaking your heart, my dear, without a word to any one."

"Oh!" she moaned then, all her proud defenses falling. "It's so hard—so hard not to know anything—only to suspect!"

Doctor Thor considered. These two were both his patients now, but that did not give him the right to divulge the secrets of one to the other. Not, at least, without first giving a warning of his intentions. Meanwhile, he could only say:

"There is no living woman you need fear. That I can promise you."

"No living woman? Then where—where is it he goes night after night, when there's a moon?" She checked herself. "No, don't tell me, even if you know. I'll wait till Michael tells me himself."

"You are a sport," said Doctor Thor, using the word that seemed to him the fittest.

"I love him," she murmured, so low that it was difficult to catch the words. "I'd give my life for him any day. I want him to have what he wants, whatever it is."

"Whatever it is?"

"Whatever it is," she repeated, adding: "Last night—I suppose it was the fever—I felt I *knew* what it was. I had a dream. I was with him, somewhere out on the downs, and there was water—he was in danger—oh, I can't remember!"

"Don't try," he bade her. "Get well first—that's your job."

"Yes," she murmured submissively. "But you know—I couldn't bear not to be with him, if he *were* in danger."

"You could be," he assured her, "if you wanted to enough. When you're asleep, or semi-conscious, you probably are with him all the time. Only, you don't remember it afterwards."

She wrinkled her brow painfully, sighed: "I don't understand things like that—I never have——" Suddenly she fixed her eyes, filmed with gathering delirium.

"I want you to promise me one thing—that if ever he is in any sort of danger, you'll save him, if you can!" She clutched his hand with her hot fingers. "Promise me—promise!"

"Very well, I promise you," said Doctor Thor, and with a little sigh she fell back on her pillows.

WHEN he went down to the living-room, there was Kennedy sitting hunched up, his chin in his hands, by the uncurtained window.

"How is she now?"

"I can't say—yet. She's making a fight for it."

"She was always a game fighter, was Mary. Of course she'll pull through this! You do think so, don't you, Doctor?"

"I hope so," the other answered gravely.

But the young man had turned again to the window and was staring out into the night. At this hour, by the dew-pond, the spirit girl would be waiting for him, finding him not there, finding herself deserted once again, left to face it alone.

Next evening the two men faced each other in front of that same window. The sky was clear, starry in patches—there would be a moon again.

"I'm going!" Kennedy was saying wildly. "I must go—you shan't stop me! Just this once more—after that, never again, I swear it!"

"But your wife?"

"She's no worse, is she?"

"She's weaker. The disease is running its course. But the crisis won't come to-night," admitted Doctor Thor reluctantly.

There was silence for a moment. Then: "I'm going to ask her!" Kennedy cried.

LIKE a man possessed he rushed up the stairs, the Doctor following him. The door of the sickroom was ajar, the nurse having gone to fetch something. Mary Kennedy lay there with flushed cheeks, breathing quickly.

"I know," she murmured, in a voice so weak it was like the sighing of the gusty wind outside—"I know what you've come for. To know if I mind your going out to—to look at the calves, Michael. Of course—I don't mind. I want you to go—just as usual!"

"But you?" the young man whispered. He put out a hand but did not touch her. He waited there, his broad shoulders bent, clumsy, suffering, torn in two.

"I shall be all right. I—I want you to go," she repeated.

Feebly she beckoned Doctor Thor to bend over her.

"Go with him!" she whispered urgently.

"But——"

"I have the nurse. I don't need you—so much. You—you promised!"

Looking into her eyes, Doctor Thor bowed his head. "I'll keep my promise."

"If I can—if there's anything in what you say—I shall be there, too," she breathed.

Then she looked beyond him at her husband, and in her smile was all the pity, the selfless devotion, of the Marys of this world.

"Take care of yourself, Michael, old thing."

THEY reached the dew-pond shortly after moon-rise, having hurried silently across the downs.

An ice-cold wind rustled the bare branches of the trees, and the moon, sailing out from behind a cloud, cast fantastic leaping shadows on the pool's surface. Kennedy had insisted on standing nearer to the edge, and Doctor Thor stationed himself close beside him, between him and the water.

"She's late," he whispered anxiously. "Supposing — supposing she doesn't come at all?"

Then he looked up, and there was Sibella, running toward them.

This time Doctor Thor wasted no glance on her ghostly pursuer. His attention was concentrated on the girl, and on the young man whose arm he held firmly. He saw the girl pause, as before, and turn her head. Saw the look of desperate appeal—the dawn of recognition in her eyes—the spirit of her, called back by this lover she had never known in the flesh, crying out to him for help. . . .

And then, quite suddenly, Kennedy broke loose. It was as if the strength of a maniac had been added to the natural force of his powerful muscles, for Doctor Thor, who himself was no weakling, felt his grasp flung off as if he had been a child. Forward the young man rushed, to the brink of the pool, his arms outstretched toward the spirit girl. Doctor Thor, as he sprang after him, knew that it was too late —nothing could save him now from that leap into the dark with her. But, as the thought flashed through his mind, he stopped dead. There were two women, now, by the pool!

Sibella still stood with her head turned, looking at Kennedy. But beyond him, looking at her over his shoulder, was another face—a face resembling her own, but with pity in it, instead of terror—the pity, the will to give, of the strong toward the weak. She was straining to say something—her lips moved, but no sound came. So tense was the current of her will to be understood that Doctor Thor could feel it, with his keen psychic sensitiveness. And he knew that the soul of Mary Kennedy, escaping from the body that lay unconscious in the grip of fever, had come to offer herself as a sacrifice, in the moment of her husband's greatest need. To save him, she willed to change places with this other, bodiless spirit—she would go out into the unknown world beyond, herself, so that Sibella might live again in her flesh, on this earth. For her wise soul, knowing so much more than her surface consciousness, knew that only so could Michael Kennedy find happiness.

"Take my place!" she was crying to Sibella. "I want him to have you. Take my place—take my place!"

For a second the little group was held there, fixed like a flashlight photograph, in the light of the moon that had sailed above the clouds—the man between the two women—the one who gave to him, the other who called to him for help. Then, in the twinkling of an eye, they were gone, and Kennedy stood there alone, his arms outstretched toward the dark water.

SIX months later, in response to a cordial invitation from Kennedy and his wife, Doctor Thor went down again to Underdown Farm.

The room in which they received him was somehow altered, he noticed. There were many cushions about—soft, rich curtains—bowls of flowers everywhere. It was altogether a softer, more essentially feminine room.

"My wife did all this," Kennedy said proudly, noticing the other's glances. "She has lots of time—

now that she doesn't work on the farm."

"Michael tells me I used always to be working hard at something or other," said she. "But I can't remember it—it was before my illness."

"And now you don't miss it?" he asked her curiously.

"Oh, no! Why should I?"

"Of course she doesn't! Hasn't she got me to do all the work for her?" Kennedy looked at her with a fond, adoring glance. "Besides, we hope, next spring—we should both like you to be the first to know, Doctor."

SHE nodded happily, smiling and blushing, her eyes very bright, her cheeks rosy. When she had left the room, Kennedy turned to the Doctor anxiously.

"How do you find her looking?"

"Marvelously well! And—the memory?"

Doctor Thor had not seen her since the night when he had led Kennedy, dazed and distraught, back from the dew-pond to the farm, to be met by the nurse with the news of her amazingly sudden turn for the better. It appeared that she had been apparently sinking—pulse very feeble, unconsciousness complete—when suddenly, as if by magic, the beat of her heart had strengthened, the high temperature had dropped. The nurse could check the very moment by the fact that, just before, she had noticed that the newly risen moon was shining full on her patient's face.

From that moment her recovery from the pneumonia had been phenomenally swift. But the disease had apparently taken toll of her mind. There was no lesion in the brain, but she suffered from a complete loss of memory of everything that had gone before that night. All her previous life was a blank to her, and not only that, but she had seemed strangely childish and timid, like a baby newly born into a strange environment. All sorts of harmless objects had frightened her—motors, telephones, airplanes. From these and other things she shrank, with a timidity the old Mary Kennedy would have laughed at. Like a child, she had to be taught, told not to be afraid, accustomed gradually. Perhaps it was in the teaching that Kennedy had found out how much she meant to him, after all. For, to his thinking, it was her illness, only, that had changed and softened and weakened her, making her a little girl to be looked after now.

AT the Doctor's question about her memory, he looked troubled.

"That's what I wanted to ask you about. She's changed a lot, of course, but her mind's sound enough—I know it is! She isn't nearly so frightened at things now. Only—she still can't remember anything that happened before that night. Will it come back, do you think? Ought I to try and remind her?"

The Doctor did not hesitate.

"No, don't try. Leave well enough alone—as long as she's happy."

"Oh, she's happy enough, my darling Sibella!"

The Doctor stared at him.

"You call her—Sibella?"

"It's a fancy of hers," Kennedy apologized. "Ever since that night she's called herself Sibella. It's almost as if she guessed"—his glance was shamefaced—"about that old foolishness of mine—that ghost business—though I never said a word to her, of course. Do you think she *did* guess, after all, Doctor?"

"I wonder!" said the Doctor of souls.

"She's going across, too, Percy," he said.

Long Shadows

By KATHARINE HAVILAND TAYLOR

A SERIAL—CONCLUSION*

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED:

ANGELICA BURKE, whose mother has just died, comes on the steamship *Atlantis* from Europe, where she has lived for years, to Long Shadows, the New Jersey home of her AUNT AGNES. Her aunt and her eldest cousin, ROGER GARRISON, seem so kindly and cheerful that the girl is immediately put at her ease, though she is rather distressed by WILLIAM, the surly youngest of the three cousins, and by PERCIVAL, who is mentally unbalanced. TOKI, the Japanese servant, and JANETTE, Percival's nurse, arouse in her a feeling of distrust.

Angelica is assigned to the East Room, which is said to be haunted by a ghost on moonless nights. During the first night BLAKE CHESTER, an old friend, commits suicide on the porch—with Roger's dagger, which has on it a curious emblem of three monkeys. Also, THEODORE CASSELL, purser of the *Atlantis*, who had given Angelica some gossip and letters for her aunt, disappears.

A letter which throws suspicion on the relations between Angelica's mother and Blake Chester is discovered among his belongings. Angelica is introduced to ROY, a disagreeable youth who works under William at the telegraph office. Later Angelica gives an envelop engraved with Blake Chester's name, which she has found in the piano, the top of which is supposed to have been nailed shut for twenty years, to DOCTOR FIELD, a pleasant young man who has attended her and has won her confidence. He opens it, finds in it twenty one-thousand-dollar bills, and takes charge of the money. He promises to come back for her at six o'clock, to take her away from that horrible house, but he does not

* This serial began in the November number. Issues containing the first four parts will be sent anywhere in the United States on receipt of twenty-five cents each.

come back. Angelica overhears Janette and Percival say that the doctor has left for South America—and hint that he may have been murdered.

After another harrowing night Angelica goes to town, ostensibly to shop, and consults the representative of a detective agency. He advises her to return as though nothing had happened and to confide in no one, and he promises to protect her fully and to ferret out the sinister mystery.

Back at Long Shadows, Angelica is greeted with the news that an innocent but rather indiscreet note which she had written to Roger the day before has been discovered by some one who wants ten thousand dollars for its recovery. Then, at dinner, the assembled family learn from the evening paper that William's Japanese friend, MACHIBU, has committed hara-kiri.

After some other terrifying experiences Angelica, pretending to take a sleeping tablet, at last gets to bed and apparently sleeps. Roger and his mother come in and rummage among her things. When they leave for a moment Doctor Field comes in through the window and hides under the bed. Later, the detective also appears and conceals himself in the "haunted" closet. Then Roger reënters and places a bloody dagger among Angelica's things, while William frantically attempts to dissuade him. Percival arrives on the scene with Janette, and hysterically threatens to expose the sinister doings. The detective and Field confront Aunt Agnes and William, but Roger escapes.

Theodore Cassell returns rather spectacularly, and joins in Aunt Agnes' accusation of Angelica and her mother as blackmailers. Angelica dresses, and they all go downstairs. As they reach the lower floor, the girl glances down the hall and sees two men carrying Roy into a room, and blood marks the route they have followed. She reaches the drawing-room, and sees that the piano is open.

Now go on with the story.

CHAPTER XIV

DAWN

THE drawing-room was ablaze with light. Janette and Percival were sitting on straight chairs that were between the front windows. My aunt, in a deep chair, was near the hearth in which were ashes—ashes! She looked as if in a minute she might say: "Shall we have a hand or two of bridge?" And then: "William, ring for Toki, will you, dear?"

She was absolutely cool, and a faintly supercilious smile played upon her lips. William stood near the cabinet in which, the first night, Percival had shown me the dagger that had been used by Blake Chester. James Field was standing by the piano that had "not been opened in more than twenty years." There was a blue-garbed man lying on the floor, one arm and shoulder tightly bound up in a brocade strip that had lain across a table, and his head was on a Japanese-embroidered sofa cushion. He was white from the loss of blood, and his eyes were closed. Stationed at other points were two men who wore blue uniforms. One was near the door, the other near Janette and Percival, and at a place where he could halt any one who might attempt to escape through a window. The man who had accompanied me was waved to a stand near my aunt by McKelvy and Dwight, who were seated at a table in the center of the room—a table that was beneath a huge, prism-decorated chandelier which now sparkled from the light it shed. Mr. Cassell was opposite my aunt, and I saw her return his smile and raise her brows as she nodded toward—me.

A man I had never seen before was huddled on a small settee, the

design of which had been inspired by the reign of one scroll-and-gilt-loving Louis; and even at the time I saw the incongruity of this figure on such a throne, he seemed so much the clumsy and slow-witted yokel.

"Sit down, Miss Burke," I heard from McKelvy, and I settled as much apart from the others as I could and as near as possible to James Field.

One by one we took oath to tell the truth and nothing but the truth. This business over, there was a lull, and during this I noticed that Dwight had by him a brief-case that was made corpulent by its contents. This he set upon a table he had swept clear of ornament, and I saw that the mantel was crowded as a result. Dwight sat faintly smiling—the expert who knew the case and who listened to correct any error.

"NOW, Mrs. Garrison," McKelvy said, "in the first place, you say that your sister used upon the backs of her letters a seal made of the three small monkeys—that symbol of silence, deafness, and blindness to trouble that has been given us by the Japanese?"

"I do," she answered clearly.

"It is untrue!" I broke out.

"Just a minute, Miss Burke," Dwight admonished me, and, shaking, I fell into an unwilling silence.

McKelvy then drew letters from his brief-case, and I saw that there were foreign stamps upon them and that they had been addressed by a pen which my mother had held.

"These are your late sister's letters, are they not?" he asked my aunt next.

"They are," she admitted. She added a malicious "But how you came by them is a different matter, and one that my attorney will, in time, ask you to explain."

"I doubt that," McKelvy answered. He paused. "Now, here," he said, holding up one of the letters, "is in the seals an interesting shade of difference that could be detected only by the experts whom we—Dr. Field and I—have employed for this case. The seal that is upon these letters that came straight to the local post office differs — slightly, true, but *differs*—from the seal upon those letters that were sent to Roger Garrison in Philadelphia, and readdressed by him there and forwarded to his mother here."

He laid down the letter.

"Had your mother two seals?" my aunt questioned, turning to me.

"I am conducting the investigation, Mrs. Garrison," McKelvy reminded her, "and I have not asked that question."

Again he reached into the brief-case.

"And here," he said, opening a small box and taking from it a small object, "is a skeleton duplicate of the key that unlocks the lid of that piano, which, according to Mrs. Garrison, was nailed down by her late husband twenty-some years ago. May I see your key ring, please, Mrs. Garrison?"

"I have no key ring," she answered scornfully. "There has been, up to this moment of rather *general* entertainment, no need for the locking of doors in this house."

I knew she had a key ring, and I started to speak; then I realized my turn had not yet come, and, setting my teeth upon my lower lip, I again sank back in my chair. Dr. Field, who had seen my sudden move, smiled at me, and his smile said: "It's all right. We'll manage it."

"THEN," said McKelvy, "we will assume that the man from whom Mrs. Garrison buys her but-

ter and eggs may have a key that will, if inserted in a lock that is hidden in a removable section of one of the legs of this old piano, unlock it. Is this not true?" he asked, turning to the rustic who was sagged upon the little settee of gilded wood and rose tapestry.

The man stood up. "I ain't aimin' to be disagreeable or nothin'," he offered in an appeasing, rural manner which for the moment deceived even me, "but I don't see why I was called in here in the first place——"

"Why were you outside in the first place?" McKelvy counter-questioned. "Is it not your custom to come here sometimes at night—as well as by day?"

"I was late gettin' home from town," the man stated.

"Yes — very," McKelvy agreed, "and your farm lies on—*the other side of town.*" Then he added roughly: "Turn over your keys to us and be sharp about it. You might as well; we'll have you searched if you're slow about it."

The man handed over a bunch of keys. McKelvy looked these over thoroughly.

"As I thought," he said, "this gentleman has the key to the long-unopened piano."

The man sank to the settee again.

"How did you get it?" my aunt demanded, anger making her voice sharp and high.

"It ain't my turn to testify," he answered. "They'll know—when my turn comes 'round." And he looked, with a leer, at me.

"THAT will do for the present, Mrs. Garrison, and thank you," said McKelvy ironically as he bowed to her. "And now, Janette Robertson, spinster, and servant of the house called Long Shadows for these twenty years, will you arise to testify, with the remembrance that you are speaking in the sight of God as well as before men, and that truth from you now may do much to alleviate those wrongs that you know have been done?"

Janette, very white, stood up. She would speak the truth, I felt — or she would speak that which she *felt* to be the truth.

"Janette," McKelvy began, "when did you first become aware of the wholesale blackmail business that was being carried on in this house?"

"When I first read a letter from *her* mother," she answered, nodding at me. "She wrote about some money I knew Mrs. Garrison had got from Mr. Dilly"—she pointed toward the butter-and-egg man. "She said——" Janette went on.

"'She,' referring to Mrs. Patrick Burke, deceased?" McKelvy broke in with an effort to clarify.

"Yes, sir, Mrs. Patrick Burke," Janette answered.

"Use names instead of pronouns hereafter, please," Mr. McKelvy requested.

"I will, sir," Janette answered.

"Proceed."

And again Janette began: "It was in the year 1907 that *it* began. There was a gentleman staying here who told a story — a disgraceful story about a lady who had left her husband to go off with a young musician. I heard it because the butler, who was named Benson and was English, heard the story as he listened at the door, as servants will now and again, sir——"

"Exactly," McKelvy agreed.

"The story was not much known, Benson told us as we drank our tea; and he said Mrs. Garrison she had been one to hear every detail, he said. He said, I remember well, sir, that she had 'fair fallen over herself to wallow in the mud,' which was his way of speaking, sir——"

"Go on, Janette," McKelvy prompted as she paused.

"Well, we in the servants' quarters knew things was a bit pinched in the money way, sir," Janette went on. "Indeed, sir, it got so that we hated to report when the sugar was low or the flour was close to the bottom of the barrel. And then suddenly it got different and money was easy and the scrimpin' was done with, and about that time I saw the letter from Mrs. Patrick Burke as I dusted. I happened on it, as you might say, in my dusting, and I happened to read it."

"What was in the letter, Janette?" McKelvy again prompted.

"WELL, Mrs. Burke she began by saying she was grateful for news of the home folks, and especially for this story of the lady who—forsook her husband occasionally; the lady who was——" Janette paused.

"My aunt," Dr. Field admitted.

"Correct. Proceed, Janette," McKelvy added.

"Then Mrs. Burke went on to say that Mr. Dilly would have some money that belonged to her—cash, she stated—and she said that if Mrs. Garrison would pay Mr. Dilly fifteen per cent of it, Mrs. Garrison could have another fifteen per cent of it, for taking the trouble to send this money across the sea to Mrs. Burke, in a money order. A money order she specified particular, and she wanted it sent from the post office in Philadelphia."

"Well?" McKelvy put in.

"Well, I judge Mrs. Garrison sent that money to her sister, Mrs. Burke. I think she was innocent of how Mr. Dilly had come by it then, but in six months I knew Mrs. Garrison was involved in this blackmail that had crept across the sea. I saw some letters she didn't mean me to see. For one time when Dilly there"—she nodded at the figure on the settee—"was drunk, and the last time he was drunk—he was made to realize then that he would have to keep sober—I opened the piano."

"Yes?" McKelvy put in. "And what did you find, Janette?"

"I found letters from Blake Chester, in which he asked Mrs. Garrison to tell Mrs. Burke that he would 'inform Mr. Burke of Mrs. Burke's persecution' of him—Blake Chester—unless *it* stopped. And *it*, of course, was blackmail."

"On what grounds?" McKelvey asked.

"Blake Chester's having a child by his wife's maid," Janette answered.

"How do you know that?" This came sharply from McKelvy.

"I was that maid," Janette answered. Her face flamed and then went white, but her eyes did not falter.

I saw my aunt move suddenly. I saw that she had not known of this, nor of how Janette, through her intimate acquaintance with this fact, which had been used for the purpose of blackmail, could put two and two together, to make a fairly sound and water-tight four.

"And how do you think Mrs. Patrick Burke came upon this indiscretion of Chester's?" McKelvy questioned.

"I know he told Mrs. Burke when they met abroad and when he was close to mad from remorse. He worshiped his wife, and so did I. She was an invalid. Mrs. Burke was the kind to whom people told everything. For years, and long before Mrs. Garrison got into *it*—meaning this blackmailing, sir—Mrs. Garrison wrote all the news of *every one* to Mrs. Burke. Mrs. Burke drew

you out, as you might say, sir, and Mr. Blake Chester himself admitted he had told Mrs. Burke of—what had happened. He admitted it in one of those letters I happened on—in the piano."

"How did you know how to open the piano?" McKelvey questioned.

"Dilly—he opened it before me—that time he was drunk. 'This is the way you get into the gold mine, Janette,' he said, laughing and stammering, thick-like, the way men who are drunk, they do. He said: 'Only two keys,' he said, 'and Roger has one in the back of that thick watch of his, and I have t'other.' Then he left the piano without locking it, and I took my look—and Roger found it open, and he was mighty frightened for a few days; yes, sir, mighty frightened! But what could I do? What could *I* do? Who would believe *me*, against the softness of *her*"—she nodded at my aunt—"and the good nature of Roger? Liked by all his friends, as he was, and who deceived all of them."

JANETTE paused to draw a deep breath.

"Why did you persecute Miss Burke?" McKelvy questioned.

"And why shouldn't I do that, to even up?" Janette replied. "She and her mother had made the three monkeys their symbol. Mr. Blake Chester started it, I think, by sending a little statue of these three monkeys to Mrs. Burke, perhaps by way of reminder of what she should remember——" She stopped a minute and then she went on hotly: "Why shouldn't I try to do what I could to hurt her—that Angelica Burke?" she asked stridently. "Didn't I know of the long shadows that had crept across the sea and into this house? Didn't I know of the plague and where it started? Didn't I know that Angelica Burke was carrying on her own mother's evil work? And her, too, looking the loveliest saint that ever trod this muddy earth—the little, lying viper!" And as she ended she turned upon me eyes that burned with hate!

"We will not deal in personalities nor make comments upon Miss Burke," McKelvy stated. "Blake Chester never blamed you for telling about his—his having a child by his wife's maid, did he, Janette?"

"No, sir," Janette answered; "no, sir, he never blamed *me*. He knew the fact made a shame for me that set a never-ending winter in my heart. He knew I was close to maddened by what had happened between us. He knew, sir, that I would die rather than tell. And, anyway, he himself told Mrs. Burke, and Mrs. Burke wrote Mrs. Garrison of what he'd told her. Her letter was with his about the matter, in the piano. 'Be good to poor Blake,' Mrs. Burke, that hypocrite, she wrote to her sister; and that after her writing all of the story she was usin' for her own bad ends!"

"Did your child live, Janette?"

Again her face flamed; again she went pale. "No, sir," she answered steadily.

"Who was your doctor?"

Janette gave a name which one of McKelvy's assistants took down.

"Did you come here, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"WHY did you stay after you knew how things were: that blackmail had crept into this house—from across the sea?"

"Because he was growing up," Janette answered, nodding toward Percival. "He was only a little boy when I came. And I needed some one to love. I was close to heartbroken, as you might say, sir, and

lonely—so lonely! And soon he cared for me, more than he ever cared for his own mother. And I come to care for him, sir, and I can't say how, so much it was. Indeed, sometimes he seemed my own. And as he grew, I knew he was innocent of all that was going on, and that it would kill him to know. So I did all I could to shelter him. But one day, when he'd slid into the haunted closet from the third floor—it has a removable ceiling, you know, sir—he heard this Dilly, here, and his mother talking. And he didn't open the door to surprise her with the present he'd brought her from town. Instead, he crept back to me, shaking and white and too dry-eyed, sir, and he said: 'Janette, how long has it been going on?' And I said: 'Ever since the devil across the sea lured your poor, weak mother into it.' And he said: 'We'll punish that devil across the sea, and we'll stop *this*'—but he didn't."

"Did he try to?"

Janette laughed—laughed horribly! "Did he *try?*" she questioned in turn. "Yes, he tried. He tried until he went a little mad—what with Roger's torturing him by telling him he was mad and imagined every bit of this—that we knew was truth—and shutting him in the cellar with a skeleton, sir, and a ghost that stalked by nights."

She stopped a moment and then, moistening her lips, she tried to speak and she failed. She fell to a palsied shaking, and I saw that her eyes were held by my aunt's.

"Janette," said McKelvy, who had watched the byplay, "much more is known of this affair than I am telling now. It is safe for you to speak the truth. Perfectly safe. They will never do any of those things to any one again. The days of torture are gone. Tell us what more you know, and without fear—and look at me, and not at Mrs. Garrison, please."

Janette obeyed. She began to speak again; her voice at first weak, but, as she spoke, gaining in strength.

"And so they did with Percival," she said, "locking him away; threatening him with threats that we knew they could carry out. Once they blindfolded us and—in the night—drove us across the hills somewhere to show us a body—of some one who had 'found out' and who had threatened to tell the truth. And then Roger and she"—Janette pointed at my aunt—"they watched us, laughing. '*He* t-told,' Roger he says then, and in that gentle way he has, sir, and he pointed to that body. And after a bit of this kind of thing, sir, we gave in. It's curious how you cling to life, even when it hurts, sir."

She fell silent. I saw her tremble.

"Proceed, Janette," McKelvy ordered sharply, eagerly.

"WELL, we give in," she confessed weakly, "and then Percival he said: 'We'll wait, and meantime, Janette, keep it from William, or he'll go mad, too'; and we did until last night, when Percival couldn't bear it no more and thought there would be—maybe—a way out of the misery, if William knew."

"Percival Garrison, then, told his brother, William Garrison, of this matter last night?" McKelvy broke in to question.

"No, sir," Janette answered. "Percival was stopped, as he had been before whenever he tried to make any one understand. Dr. Field will tell you he has never, *not once*,

seen Percival Garrison without his mother's or Roger's being with him."

"Correct," put in Dr. Field.

"William he doesn't know—he *never* knew," Janette went on after a gasp, and I looked at William to see that this was true.

"But, Janette, with the authorities within hail," McKelvy said, "certainly you could have reported?"

She answered—impatiently now: "What chance had we?—I, a nobody; Percival, whom they had made the countryside to think of as an idiot? And you don't know the *power*, nor what can *happen* here, sir! You don't know the strength of them, nor what looking on a mutilated body will do to you." She drew a deep breath. "You don't know what hunger will make you promise," she added, "and, sir, you don't know what a woman will bear for the boy who seems her own son—nor of how she can fear pain—for him—and grow the coward——"

"Quite mad," my aunt murmured. "Too much in the company of my son, I suppose—poor, *poor* Janette!"

"No interruptions, please," McKelvy ordered sharply. "Why," he asked, "did no servant in the house ever hear the noises made by the inquisition, Janette?"

"There were few noises made, sir. The first time, you made a noise. The second time, you did not—make a noise."

"Sit down, Janette," McKelvy said.

"I have more to tell, sir——" she began.

"YOU can tell it later. . . . Dilly," he said sharply, turning to the rustic who was on the ornate, small settee.

"It was her mother always," Dilly stated, standing up. He pointed to me. "Blake Chester he knew it," he went on, "and that there Cassell he knows it."

"Cassell?" McKelvy ordered, turning to him.

"I was held by men who admitted to me, before I escaped, that they were working for Angelica Blake," Cassell stated slowly. "And I had further proof. Before we landed on this last trip over I asked Miss Burke to carry a package to her aunt for me. The steward who valeted for me saw her open that package and put into it two letters and a blotter which, I assume, she planned to use in her way—and which, I presume, she thought would be safest carried in that package which, once here, she could again open *before she gave it to her aunt*. I saw those letters and the blotter when the package was opened by the customs official."

McKelvy laughed. "We know of all that—and from Sage," he said. *"Sage has been apprehended and is now in a safe place—and kept there,* as an important witness in this case."

I saw my aunt lose color.

"And then," Mr. Cassell went on, "Blake Chester came to me, to ask me whether——"

"Wait a minute, Cassell," McKelvy broke in. "I am consumed by curiosity which I shall voice now, as your story is an old one to me, and so does not interest me."

I saw surprise on Cassell's face. "You don't know this story," he disagreed. "Sage doesn't know it."

"No?" McKelvy drawled. "None the less," he went on briskly, "it will keep. And I want to know now, Mrs. Garrison, why those charming missives which came to sundry who were shadowed by past indiscretions were addressed by Mrs. Garrison in the backhand writing she used *only* when writing to her sister and her

blackmail addresses—*a writing she made in imitation of her sister's?* And why did the envelopes thus addressed hold letters written in *Dilly's illiterate hand*, which told the recipients to leave money at an especial place in a suburb on the other side of Philadelphia, to which Dilly's butter-and-egg business takes him often, and where, a week ago, he found twenty one-thousand-dollar bills donated by the late Blake Chester?"

No one answered.

"The writing Mrs. Garrison cultivated for her friends on this side was quite different. You remarked—noted—the similarity of your aunt's writing to your mother's?" McKelvy ended by asking, as he turned to me.

I nodded. "We often spoke of it," I said.

"No one else did," McKelvy commented, "for the writing Mrs. Garrison used while penning screeds to her friends on this side was quite different, in no way similar to the writing she used upon the letters addressed to your mother, the late Mrs. Patrick Burke. Did your father know of your posting letters for your aunt, Miss Burke?" McKelvy ended.

"No," I answered; "my aunt asked that we should not tell him, and we respected her request, because she had made it, and because my father hated deceits of all kinds—even to small deceits."

"Um," McKelvy murmured. Then he said loudly: "Now, William Garrison, the truth about this Jap." And William came forward.

"Toki is—or was—in the empioy of Yoshiri Machibu, who was of high rank and good family, and was a classmate of mine in college."

"And while he was there your mother sent him little notes because he was 'lonely'?"

"Yes," William answered.

"And after his college course ended he asked you to let a servant of his come here as a servant, so that he might be well treated here in the States?"

"Yes," William responded. "And last night," he went on, "we read in the paper of a disgrace that young Machibu has brought upon his family, and I think it was that which made Toki go mad, as he certainly did."

"That and a few other trifles," McKelvy agreed.

AGAIN he delved into his briefcase, and this time he brought out letters addressed in the hand my aunt had used while writing to her friends, and not that which she had used on those countless letters we had posted for her from various smart places, so that her friends might think she was traveling where she should travel—in the proper seasons.

"Machibu got these threats while at college from William, who unwittingly passed them on from his mother, who feared Machibu might be 'lonely.' They were given her, Mrs. Garrison wrote Machibu, by an old man who had traveled in Japan and remembered Machibu; and each one contained a little threat to tell of the fact that Machibu's mother had not been an entirely sheltered lotus-bud—to tell this unless Machibu settled, as he did. These threats *came directly from this house*—called, and most appropriately, Long Shadows. He therefore duped you, Mr. William Garrison, who agreed to bring his servant here, not knowing that that servant was a detective who had been sent here to do his work: Toki, the detective, sent by Machibu. And he trusted you, up to very recently, when he began to suspect

you, together with every one else in this house. We know *that* from Dr. Field, who suspected that Toki was figuring in the case when he saw, through a small mirror he cupped in his palm, that Toki—behind him—was skulking around the door of the East Room in order to listen. Toki then tried to poison Miss Burke—he suspected her because of the wise hints Mrs. Garrison had planted, and she planted these because she was beginning to know fear herself from blackmail letters that she *herself* was beginning to get. These letters threatened to tell what happened at Long Shadows, and they came from one who was as well hidden as Mrs. Garrison had been—up to the last week."

"I'm not sure I follow," William murmured unsteadily.

"My art is discovery, not explanation," McKelvy said. "I'll make it clear to you soon, Mr. William, but just now we must proceed. *After* Toki attempted to poison Miss Burke with a deadly poison he put upon a thermometer, Field took Toki to his office. There Toki became the confidant of Dr. Field, who has been working upon this case for years, who told the truth to Toki, and who *now has the truth for you!*" McKelvy swept the letters into his brief case as he ceased speaking.

CHAPTER XV

THE CASE IS OVER

"ALL very delightfully worked out," my aunt murmured, "but my own testimony will change the hue of all that has been said to this point." She smiled around the group, meeting coolly and confidently the eyes that searched hers.

"Yes?" McKelvy questioned smoothly as he leaned across the table and toward her.

"Yes," she agreed brightly. "But, to convince you of my innocence, I must first go to my room for some papers."

McKelvy smiled quizzically and raised his brows.

"You can send quite all of your gallant aides with me, if you like," said my aunt with a suavity and an airiness that she made bitingly sarcastic.

"One will do," McKelvy answered evenly, and he nodded toward the man standing by the window, who immediately came forward. "And may I ask, Mrs. Garrison, that you make haste?"

"You have no more wish for haste than I," she responded crisply. "My utmost desire is to have done with this irksome matter!"

SHE stood up, and the man who had been by the window followed her. At the door she paused.

"In the light of that which I am about to disclose," she said, "I think it would be well for you to have a thought about the absent Toki, who, since his attempted murder of Roy Peters, is certainly a murderer as well as a detective." She paused a moment, smiling, and then with a little lift of her shoulders she left the room, the man in uniform at her heels.

We heard their feet on the stairs—my aunt's light, quick tread, and the heavy, lumbering feet of the man who followed. We heard them go down the long upper hall to my aunt's room.

Out of a silence that seemed to throb—so charged it was with strain—McKelvy spoke:

"You tied the Jap well?" he questioned.

And one of his men answered a sure "Yes."

Then—from above us we heard a shot.

The confusion that ensued I can't describe. Janette screamed; Percival whimpered eerily; old Dilly let out a round, rough oath; Cassell stood swaying. Each of us showed, by some display, the fact that this was the proverbial last straw. Even McKelvy jumped.

Two of the officers pounded, on a run, up the stairs, and we waited.

Some one called down a loud "Shot herself!"

McKelvy said: "The case is over," and he stood up.

I THOUGHT we all went, a crowding, incoherent, hysterical mob, up the stairs. Later, I found that Jim Field had not gone with us; but that, *à la* Kipling, is another story! And at the head of the stairs we again saw the breaking down of a door—this time the door that led to my aunt's room. And when that was broken down a new surprise awaited, for the second officer of the law to be hurt that night lay crippled on the floor, a pool of blood gathering from a wound in his thigh.

"Some—one—outside—the window—got me," he gasped. "And she—left that—way."

CHAPTER XVI

A NEW DAY

A LITTLE later, or I *think* a little later—I am not sure of anything about those hours—Dr. Field led me to the dining-room, where I settled, trembling, by the table.

"Janette is making us coffee," he said, "and then we'll have our talk—the truth and nothing but the truth. Don't shake so, dear. There's nothing left to hurt you."

Janette brought us coffee, and her face was softened when it turned on me, and her eyes were full of the most abject apology. When I smiled at her, as reassuringly as I could with lips that would tremble, I saw something else, and of salty tang, fill her eyes.

When she left she murmured: "I'm glad Toki got away!"

And I said: "I'm glad he did, too!"

Dr. Field smiled.

"Did some one cut the ropes that bound him?" I questioned.

Still smiling, Dr. Field said that it seemed so, and suddenly I knew who had done it.

"Roy Peters is going to live," he said, "although God knows the world would be a better and a safer place if he did not! But—because Toki tried to prevent Roy's escape, feeling that Roy had much to do with the persecutions that had floated from this house across the sea to the Machibus, whom Toki's family had served for years—Toki would be regarded as a criminal." Then Dr. Field went on after a short pause: "Roy has been so close to death that he is afraid to lie any more. We have a full confession from him."

"My mother is cleared?" I questioned.

"Yes, poor woman!" James Field answered. "It was Blake Chester's certainty of her guilt that poisoned your father against her, and that made your father write that incriminating letter—and the letter, of course, referred only to blackmail. And, speaking of letters, we found that some of the letters ostensibly from your mother had never been written by her, and those forged letters were the ones in which your mother asked your aunt to send her large sums of money, which Dilly was to give Mrs. Garrison. They

were working here, even then, with the idea of self-protection against that moment when protection might be needed. And, too, they wanted Janette, who *knew* of the activities, to attach the real blame elsewhere, which she did. No money orders were recorded in the United States Post Office for any money whatsoever, sent to your mother from your aunt," Dr. Field ended.

"Head whirling a little?" he questioned after a moment.

"I'm utterly in the dark," I said.

"Daylight's here," he told me cheerfully, "and there aren't going to be any more of the kind of nights you've known.

"AND now for the story: The whole very active and successful business started, not when Janette told you it did, but before; not long after I had been guilty of telling Roger Garrison—a classmate of mine at Cornell—a story I alone knew that concerned another member of our class. Very soon after this, although I had sworn Roger to secrecy, I found that several other chaps had heard the tale, and then the man who had figured in the story—the son of a very wealthy Western packer—came to me to say he was being blackmailed. Roger, at approximately the same time, came to me, vastly upset—too upset, I felt even then—to tell me that he had heard the story from other sources. 'I d-don't w-want you to th-think *I* t-told it!' he said. Still, even at that time I was certain that he *had* told it, for the purpose of making the blackmailer less easy to find.

"About that time also, or a little later, *my* aunt told *your* mother of her indiscretion; and about six months later my aunt was requested to hand over a considerable sum of 'hush money,' which she did. I thought then: 'Mrs. Burke has written the woman who has her entire confidence—Mrs. Garrison, her sister—of this affair of my aunt's'; and that supposition time has proved to be correct.

"But I had no real proofs, and I intended to get them. My conscience prompted me to this research, for one thing, since my indiscreet babbling had given into Roger Garrison's hold a fat victim. My aunt's predicament enraged me, too, and it told me something of how dire a thing this successful blackmail business was, and how necessary, for the peace of many, it was to have it stopped. So, one day in Philadelphia, I told Roger I couldn't decide where to start my practice, and he suggested this Godforsaken town. I pretended to consider his suggestion at length, although I knew from the start that I was coming here. Then I told Roger, with some hesitation, that I thought perhaps it would be a good idea, and I moved here. And I let Roger think I was a garrulous gossip. I told him things that I thought he didn't know, but that the world *did* know—such stray bits of gossip as he might have missed—and in every case the man or woman who figured in these tales, a little time later, had a request for money that would buy silence.

"Roger never realized on these cases through which I located the truth, for I gave him news about only the hardened, who did not care, or news so generally known that nothing could hush it. But still he sought my company, hoping some day to extract from one whom he considered a fool something in the way of news that would pay well.

"About that time Roger and his mother persuaded William, who had just left college, to become the manager of the local telegraph com-

pany—an odd post for a boy who had studied for the consular service, and who could have had a good appointment. But, Roger explained, one of the boys should be in the village and within hail of their mother, who was alleged to have heart trouble. I never found it, by the bye, and no honest physician could! William hated this town, but they made him stay.

"WHEN Percival heard of William's going into the telegraph office he had a violent nervous breakdown, and I knew the reason, which was that Percival knew *why* his mother and Roger wanted William in the telegraph office. They could extract from William the news that floated into the village *via* wire, or they could get in contact with some malleable fabric, if William remained firm—which they did, in Roy. Roy occasionally took messages. He was very willing to open the telegrams he delivered, and it was easy enough to slip them into fresh envelopes, as the address is always typed on the telegram. No one could know they had been tampered with. Roy was about as good an aide as Mrs. Garrison and Roger could have, and he realized well in a financial way for his trouble. A great deal comes over the wires which can be 'used' by the proper person, as you can imagine.

"About six months ago Machibu decided to send some one to this house, from which he believed the trouble emanated. So he persuaded William to secrecy, saying that Toki was a young cousin who wanted to study American life, and that no one—absolutely no one but William—must know of Toki's connection with the Machibus. William agreed, willingly enough, and Toki, as William's friend and confidant, came to do his work and to delve into the mystery.

"You and your mother were involved. Your aunt made a practise of leaving, in prominent places, letters from your mother, in which your mother, in the most straightforward fashion, told the news—good and bad—of your mother's and Mrs. Garrison's mutual friends."

"Were there, among them, any letters that told of our having posted my aunt's letters from abroad?" I questioned.

"No," he answered; "and the fact that your mother would mention her 'letter of last week,' and that it was gone from the sheaf of them, also gave rise to suspicion."

Dr. Field paused a moment, and during the lull I realized how naturally Janette—seeing these letters from my mother—would think my mother not only my aunt's partner in the blackmail business, but the instigator of the whole affair.

"WHEN you came I knew you were running into a trap," Dr. Field went on, "*if* you were entirely innocent, of which I was not certain until I heard your tale. Then I decided I could protect you through Toki and the bell-mender in his various guises—McKelvy. But the thought of your suffering through fright has made many sleepless nights for me, my dear!"

To which I said nothing, but I felt my heart going hard and happily!

"Well," he began again, after a deep breath, "Janette and Percival thought you guilty, as you know. William was beginning to feel that *something* was wrong in the house, and your aunt began to scent trouble—which all made an intricate tangle. Some one told your aunt that *I* knew—perhaps Dilly. Your aunt

decided to get me out of the way, and she almost succeeded.

"I went to the bedside of a delirious patient. I ordered him to the Mercy Hospital, and I went with him. But I don't think either this man or the driver knew that I had been the best boxer in Cornell in my time, and that I had always kept up this gentle art—for exercise. I did them both in, and pretty well! I subsequently strapped one of the men in front of my telephone and made him telephone here that I had 'gone on'—the pleasant vernacular for their confession of having killed me—and then I had them locked up. I also had my secretary give the message that they would have sent her, in my forged hand, by those men who took me, or by one of their accomplices—a forged note, you see, in which *I* had said I was off for South America. And when my secretary reported this to Mrs. Garrison, your aunt felt as if the fish had all risen to the bait, and as if everything were going just as she had planned that it should.

"I then found that Roy was to go to New York, where Mrs. Garrison thought he could 'do well' in a larger telegraph office. McKelvy offered him a lift to Philadelphia, and he delivered Roy into my keeping. I locked him on the third floor of my house. He escaped. He came here for help. Toki, who had long suspected Roy, and hoped to force some of the truth from him, got him. And it was Roy's scream you heard when you were in Percival's room. He screamed before Toki gagged him, bound him, and stuffed him into a little closet that, I think, the Garrisons do not know exists. Toki found it during some of his otherwise fruitless searches."

"But Roy telephoned," I interrupted, "from New York——"

"No, he didn't telephone," Dr. Field contradicted. "Some one working for Toki telephoned. Toki called New York from the local station during one of his 'constitutionals.' His agent then called, and spoke in a muted voice which might have been Roy's—or any one's. That part wasn't difficult. Toki, thinking Roy knew the whole truth, from having seen him open that piano and put something into it, kept Roy here; starved him, and — stabbed him last night on the steps, as you know, when Roy attempted to escape."

"My aunt——" I hesitated. I found "aunt" difficult to say! "My aunt and Roger did escape?" I asked.

Dr. Field told me that they had; and that some confederate—possibly Dilly—had started his motor after Roger's shot which had "winged" Bennet, had run it a little way with Roger in it, and stopped it; and Roger had come back—a dutiful son—to await his mother, who, after her bogus suicide, had crawled down the ladder that Roger had propped up against her window as frankly as if he were trimming vines! And then she had walked with Roger to the motor and started.

"And that ends that tale for us," said Dr. Field. "We shall hardly see them again. They will probably choose for their living place some secluded spot in France or South America. But I think they will never conduct this business in such a wholesale fashion again—not after this night!"

And I agreed.

THEN Dr. Field told me there had been dictaphones "planted" in "the little room" and elsewhere, and on these were recorded my aunt's and Roger's discussions about how much they dared ask me for the letter I had written Roger. And

about how it would be best for Roger to insist upon paying half the sum.

"That night in 'the little room'?" I questioned next.

"Oh, that? McKelvy thought he had Mrs. Garrison in there. We wanted to frighten the truth from her. I was lying on the lounge, masquerading as poor Blake Chester. We'd entered the room by a trap door that leads to the cellar. Toki knew it—he had found it, and used it often."

"And the ring of the bell that I heard—the one that was supposed to be out of order?" I asked.

"My man, Dwight, fixed them so that they would ring after ten at night, and so that the outside watchman could give him help if the bell were heard to ring and no one outside had touched it. We thought the bell could be out of order for a day or so, and I was at my wits' end as to how to guard you. Blake Chester rang the bell after ten that night. William, amazed at the ring of the bell, but diverted from mentioning it later by other matters, let him in. Then Chester asked William to step out to see whether any one was following him. He explained that he was stopping in the town and that old habit had made his footsteps take him toward Long Shadows. William stepped out. I saw him, and I did not see the suicide, and so, for a time, I was confused, and I doubted William—a little. Toki heard the conference between William and Chester. He also heard a drawer of the curio cabinet being opened. He did not know what was happening until he found that a knife he had seen in the cabinet was the knife used by Blake Chester when he killed himself. When William returned, Blake Chester, who must have known about Percival's 'treasures,' had the knife in his pocket. One of the men who paraded around here each night saw William outside that night, but did not see the suicide. We had to be pretty careful about the men around here, for 'they' had their guards, too, in Roy and Dilly and Dilly's aides. Then Blake left, William having assured him that no one was around outside. I assume that Blake Chester hoped to see you. Possibly he meant to kill you, my dear!"

"I saw Blake Chester's face at my window," I said.

Dr. Field nodded. "It was a dark night, and the man who had been fixing the eaves troughs had left a ladder—and thus, sometimes, do the most abstract of mysteries work out in common terms! McKelvy and I used that same ladder last night."

I said a flat "I see!" And then I continued: "Why did they say my mother and Mr. Chester used—the emblem?"

"Because Blake Chester once sent it to your mother by your aunt, in an effort to let her know that he knew what she was doing. Your aunt saw all that the ironically employed emblem meant, and she affixed it to the letters from your mother—after they came. Roger affixed a similar seal upon those letters from your mother that were delivered to his rooms in Philadelphia. All remarkably simple, isn't it?"

I AGREED. "But the haunted closet and the door no one could keep locked?" I questioned.

"There is a sliding ceiling in that closet. Many times it has been pushed aside so that some one draped in an ordinary sheet might slip into the guest-room to search a terrified —swooning — guest's luggage for letters. The bluish light was simply

another trick. There was more than one key to that door—and that's all. The lights were so fixed that they would not work—in the East Room—at these times; nor at these times would the call bell in the East Room register in the servants' hall. Cassell found the lights useless at one time while he was here—and perhaps you did?"

I nodded. I could not speak for remembering my terror.

"And Percy got into my room through the 'haunted closet,'" I asked, "to spatter my mirror with blood, and to draw pictures in the dust on it?"

"Yes. And Roger got in that way with a handkerchief of yours that Toki knew he had soaked in beef juice—he found him getting it out of the refrigerator. Roger used a good deal of beef juice, and in a good many places." Had Roger splattered it on William's neck that morning after Blake Chester's demise, I wondered.

I spoke of this, and Dr. Field answered: "Very probably; Roger and his mother were suspecting every one after the disappearance of that money from the piano—which, perhaps, one of them had left open on the morning when you found Blake Chester's 'letter'—perhaps through the failure of the catch in that small lock, which was old and overworked."

"I can't understand," I confessed, "all this fussing with the closet door——"

"Tricks are useful to the tricky," said Dr. Field. "After a few raps and scratchings in that closet, and after seeing the door swing open once or twice—on a dark, *moonless night*, remember, my dear—the outsider would put all the unexplained noises down to the psychic, in which your aunt professed to believe, when her guests asked, sometimes, too revealing questions of the tipping table in her drawing-room—a table I suppose she and Roger manipulated between them. And thus, drained of all useful information, and without suspicions that humans had made all the noises he heard—with some noises as a mere cloak for others—the outsider would go away frightened as he remembered Long Shadows and the electricity which would not always respond; and he would say: 'There is something in that spook business, after all!'

"Roy and Dilly sometimes came at night, you see. Toki found the long pile on the carpet stamped down again and again, when at bed-time it had not shown a footmark—and it was usually the carpet around the piano. McKelvy and Dwight watched that, too."

"AND Mr. Cassell?" I asked then, and as I spoke he appeared in the doorway.

"Miss Burke," he asked humbly, "may I come in?"

"Of course," I answered.

He moved toward us and sat down at the table opposite me.

"I want you to forgive me if you can," he began, his arms resting on the table, his hands twisting. "I believed it was you because of the story of Sage, my steward, and because the men who made me captive told me they worked for you. I was imprisoned at Dilly's farm."

"You were a little too friendly with Blake Chester," Dr. Field stated.

And I remembered the note I had found in the piano and that I had read and that had gone to nothing in my palm—a note that had given warning of the fact that "C" was getting too intimate with "C." Had this been written by Sage? I turned to Dr. Field to ask him the question, and he nodded.

"Go on, Mr. Cassell," I said.

"Well, you see," he began again, falteringly, "I had told you all that gossip, Miss Burke, and Sage had told *me* that he had seen you open that packet I'd given you to slip into it two letters and a blotter. Of course Sage had really done it, being in Mrs. Garrison's employ. A little after you left the customs office, Blake Chester appeared. I knew him through Mrs. Garrison, who had given him a letter of introduction to me, which he had presented some time before, while crossing with us. Chester asked me to come with him to his office, which I did. He then told me that Angelica Burke was conducting a blackmail business that was on the largest scale of any, he supposed, that had ever been conducted, and he told me how he had suffered: and I recalled what I had done toward helping this—I then supposed—criminal. I never thought of Sage, who has confessed that he has been working for Mrs. Garrison for years—hasn't he?" he ended, turning to Dr. Field.

"Yes, years," Dr. Field agreed.

"How the devil did *you* suspect the truth?" Theodore Cassell halted his story to question.

"In many ways," Jim Field answered. "Roger's bland stupidity I knew—from early in the game—to be assumed. That made me suspicious. Then I had an efficient firm working on this case. They got the letters."

"Simple, if you know how," Mr. Cassell commented sheepishly. "But still I don't see how you—*why* you—suspected Sage."

"*You* disappeared after being seen here by William, who thought nothing about telling of having seen you," Dr. Field explained. "McKelvy and my man, Dwight, thought with me that the man who valeted for you aboard the *Atlantis* might know something about you and your connection with Long Shadows, toward which rumor said you were heading when you disappeared. We found Sage in a disreputable sort of hole in lower New York. The man who captured him told him the whole story was known. He said, quaking: 'I never done nothing but to pick up torn-up letters and such out of waste-baskets and send 'em to her'—and he blurted out the whole thing—everything he knew and *more!* And he's waiting with his little story. But go on, Cassell, with your version of the tale."

"AFTER I saw Blake Chester," Mr. Cassell said, "and had heard from Chester about you, Field, and that you were trustworthy, I wired you, telling you to watch Miss Burke; that she was not sane, and that I would be over soon—to explain the nature of her malady. Of course Roy got this, and he and Dilly, wishing no investigation of the house through any one, caught me and took me to a hidden cellar on Dilly's farm, which your men, who were searching for me, missed by about two inches, I imagine."

Listening, I wondered whether the telegram Mr. Cassell had sent Dr. Field had been the telegram that upset William, as he confessed one had? Certainly I knew that it was that one—with its hint about my lacking sanity—that had made William watch me narrowly and circumspectly, and that had first kept him from cordiality and then made him—as he grew into liking me—say they would keep me. Poor William, who had been duped and tricked and held in the town he hated, and who had been innocent always!

"I chartered an airplane and headed this way," Cassell continued. "I met Roger outside this house. I told him that some one in Long Shadows

knew too much of an art that is practised only by criminals. Deeply shocked, Roger said: 'Go off to the hotel and wait. I'll come there to talk to you.' On the way back to town I was knocked down and out by Dilly and Roy, and they took me to the cave on Dilly's farm. I escaped from that last night, after Dilly had left. Then I came here, stepped over the body of Roy, and walked in the open door."

"*C'est fini*," I murmured.

Theodore Cassell leaned even farther across the table, and toward me.

"If you could forgive me enough to marry me——" he whispered.

I shook my head. I wanted to say: "I could never marry any one who could not love me in spite of anything." But instead I said: "I have felt only friendship for you, Mr. Cassell, and that in the most casual way. I am sorry."

He stood up; he was white, but he bowed with a real dignity; and so he left us.

CHAPTER XVII

COUSINS

"THERE is the difference," said Jim Field; "for if I could have believed that of you—and that I doubt—it wouldn't have made any difference. You see, I am built to care that way. I have waited a long time for this, and now I know why!"

I said: "Are you forgetting my aunt?"

"My dear," he pointed out, "Roger's question is answered—the one he asked of you in the blackmail letter which came to you—from him—after you had written him so sweetly and so trustingly. And no one, my dear, who knows anything of blackmail, could have written such a letter as you wrote him. But to answer the question, the taint is at Long Shadows and not in the blood. There is crime that we must both forget, and on both sides. My aunt, who made herself the possible victim of blackmail, is not a connection of whom I am proud. I think we're even, and, anyway, does that matter? Does anything matter but—the thing I feel for you?" He paused. "I seem to be taking a great deal for granted," he went on, after a little interval, "but it seems to me that that which I feel is too great for me to feel alone, without some—very sweet echo of it in you."

I could not speak at once. Jim Field put his hand over mine. "Well," he confessed, "I'm waiting, and—it's not easy. I can never tell you, my dear, how much I love you, but all my life I shall work to show you, in every way."

"Oh——" I began. I was going to say: "I love *you*, too!"

But Percival came in. "Angelica," he whimpered, "can you—forgive us? It was hard for me—with every proof—to believe that you—were doing—all that was done. You remember, at first—I wanted them to let you go?"

I nodded; I stood up and put my arms around his neck, and, drawing his head down, I kissed him. Then he hid his face against my shoulder and sobbed. And when he raised his face, tear-stained but happy, he said: "Janette and William and I are going abroad. What are you going to do, dear—Cousin Angelica? Will you—come with us?"

James Field, who had risen when I had, slipped an arm around my waist and drew me against him. "She's going across, too, Percy," he said, "but not with *you*—are you, dearest?"

"No," I whispered.

"But perhaps we'll see you over there, Cousin Percy," Jim added.

He grabbed the tool and fell to it manfully.

The Clock That Talked

By MELVIN LOSTUTTER

Private Wilson awoke from a drugged sleep and plunged into as vivid a nightmare as any that the Big Parade afforded. But at the end, after an appalling moment of being suspended in mid-air, he slid into safety—and the arms of a beautiful girl.

THE NOISE and tumult in Thiaucourt were dying down when Private Arthur Wilson entered. The Germans, except for a few stubborn machine gunners, had left precipitately hours before. But here was a baggage wagon that had not gone soon enough, its horses dead and its driver slumped forward in the seat. There was another figure face down on the cobblestones, with a dark stain discoloring the back of a gray-green blouse. A mule sprawled clumsily across the street a little further up. Some of the houses bore proof of the shell-fire which had swept over. The little town had the dead, deserted look which towns have when they are caught in a war.

As Private Wilson approached the big, old medieval church, he glanced at his wrist-watch and then up at the clock in the tower. Six o'clock—that couldn't be right. His own timepiece said two, and he could tell by the sun that it was the nearer right, to say the least. The big clock had stopped. Later he remembered the trifling incident.

Wilson was tired, hungry, disgusted—and lost. He had no idea where his company was. Assigned as a runner, he had lost trace of it early that morning. He had been sent back with a message for regimental headquarters, but the P. C. had moved and it had taken him an hour to find it. Then had begun a disheartening search for his own detachment. He was worried for fear some one might think he had not tried—that he was a malingerer. His only consolation was that there were plenty of other soldiers who were lost. Take, for instance, the major of the —th Infantry, who had no idea whatever of what had become of his own battalion.

Where soldiers move forward as swiftly over strange terrain as they did on that St. Mihiel drive, the movement is not as mathematical and methodical as it is commonly supposed to be. A unit is hard to find once you lose contact with it.

Private Wilson sat down on the church steps to rest and think things over.

SUDDENLY there came a crackling and banging over to the right of the town, just at the edge, and he sprang up to see what it was. An unusual display of fireworks. A German shell had unerringly picked out an ammunition dump and set it off. Quite a coincidence.

Wilson watched with interest, for this was his first time at the front and he wished to see all he could.

In a few moments the demonstration was over. Smoking bits of metal, scarred earth, and perhaps a torn body or two nearby marked the spot where had been row upon row of neatly placed shells — 75's and 155's. Wilson walked down the steps to the street. He wondered a little disinterestedly where his company could be—and, a little hazily, what time it was.

He glanced up at the clock in the tower again. The movement was purely automatic, for the town clock back in the little Indiana village had been right across from a certain bank, and a dreamy young teller could so easily glance out of the window in the bright spring, in the sultry summer, in the glowing fall, in the crisp winter. And habits are so easily formed.

Ten minutes after six! Had he been sitting there ten minutes? He must be getting on. He glanced at his wrist-watch. Yes, ten minutes —but his watch said ten minutes after two. Guess the clock was running, but it had somehow got ahead of itself. He started up the street.

An on-coming shell screeched its warning, and Wilson flung himself into the shelter of a corner made by two buildings. There was a heavy explosion a block or so behind him. He looked back and saw sickeningly that it had struck in the midst of a column of troops marching up his way. Another shell, and another. They hit in nearly the same spot.

"That wasn't luck. Somebody had 'em spotted!" Wilson muttered.

Two wounded men—walking cases —came limping by, headed for the rear. Wilson recognized one of them as a corporal from his own company, and ran over to him.

"Where's the outfit?" he demanded.

"Still going that way the last I saw of 'em," replied the corporal with an indefinite wave of the hand.

Wilson decided that he should be able to find his company before dark, surely, and glanced up at the clock again.

Five minutes after six! The hands had run backward since the last time he had noticed them!

As he stood gaping upward, sorely puzzled, he heard another shell coming, and dived for cover again. When two or three more had gone over and burst to the rear, he rose and started for the church. His curiosity was aroused, and he forgot that he was lost and long past due back with his company.

He had no trouble getting into the big stone building, for other soldiers, mopping up, had pushed the door open and gone hurriedly through it. But, once inside, he felt strangely alone. The solemn stillness seemed miles away from the battlefield, the dim half-light awed him. Instinctively he put his hand to his head as if to remove his hat, forgetting that he wore a helmet instead. He stood uncertain for a moment and had to fight the impulse to turn about and seek the open. Then he began a search for the stairway to the tower.

HE PUSHED two or three small doors open, and at last found himself in a dark, musty little room from which rose a ladder-like stair. Up this he climbed slowly, pausing now and then to listen. He came to a landing deep with dust, and it occurred to him to draw his automatic. Not that he thought he would have the slightest need for it, but he was finding this adventure decidedly depressing.

Up he went again. His eyes were becoming accustomed to the darkness. Darkness — he could hardly realize now that it was only mid-afternoon! He had the feeling of having been in the old church for a long time.

He came to another landing. Dim rays of light filtered in through a slit in the wall. He stood still, ears sharpened, and to his taut nerves came the sensation of another presence there with him.

His hand gripped harder on the butt of his automatic, the muscles in his arms and neck tightened.

He wheeled suddenly as he thought he heard the sound of repressed breathing in the corner behind him.

The deepest shadow moved. Or did it?

WILSON jerked his pistol down.

"*Non, non, m'sieur!*"

It was a girl's voice, low and tremulous, and the shadow disengaged itself and moved toward him.

"Who are you?" Wilson demanded, his voice unsteady and his pistol still pointed at her.

"French girl," she replied in quaint English. "And you, *m'sieur?*"

"An American soldier," he replied.

"Oh, t'ank God!" she breathed. "The Americans have come!"

"What are you doing up here?"

"Hiding from the *boche*," she said. "I was afraid, but now I am not, I am so 'appy."

"What did you fear?"

"There was an officer. W'en the *boche* began to retreat I was afraid he——" Her voice trailed off, then she went on: "So I hid in here. I know the place well. My father is sexton. W'y did *you* come?"

"To see what is the matter with the clock," said Wilson.

"Ah, it is gone crazy," the girl broke in. "The — w'at you call — shell bursting so near, *n'est-ce-pas?* My father will not be 'appy until he feexes it."

"I think I will just go on up and have a look," said Wilson.

"*Mais, pourquoi?*" asked the girl. "W'y?"

The American noticed that the h's were deliciously missing from the words that rolled from her tongue, and that her figure was piquantly alluring in the vague light.

"I thought I'd try to find out why

it runs forward part of the time, and then backward," he said.

Did the girl start, or was it an illusion caused by the quick step she took toward him?

"I have only now come from there," she said. "You cannot feex it. Only Papa can do that. Are you hungry, or thirsty, per'aps?"

"Both," he replied, as he suddenly realized how famished he was.

"Then let us go down," she said. "I shall get for you something to eat—not much, for they 'ave not left us much—and some wine."

SHE started for the stairs. Wilson hesitated, then followed.

He had difficulty in keeping up with her, so surely and swiftly did she make her way down the steep, narrow steps. She surely knew every inch of them.

Finally the two reached the bottom, and the girl led the way back through the church and out a rear door into a courtyard. On one side was a small house. She went in and Wilson followed. They were in a tiny vestibule with three interior doors, all closed.

"Go on through," said the girl, "and I shall follow directly."

Wilson started to open the door to his right.

"No, not that," the girl said quickly. "The centre one."

He obeyed, and she went through the third.

Wilson, feeling pretty well exhausted by this time, sank down into a large chair and looked about him. He was in the living-room of a typical French cottage. The girl came in with some bread, cheese, and a bottle of white wine, which she set before him.

"An 'umble offering," she apologized, "but, such as it is, you are welcome."

Wilson admired the quality in her tapering fingers as she filled his glass. They matched the rest of her, slender and spirited.

"Will you join me, *mademoiselle?*" he invited.

She shook her head, and the corners of her mouth quirked in a fleeting smile.

"*Merci,*" she replied, "I have eaten."

Wilson enjoyed the bread and cheese, trying not to appear too ravenous. He had been without food for twenty-four hours.

"Where did you learn to speak English?" he asked, between mouthfuls.

"At the convent," she said. "And I was in England with my mother for a time. That was before—before Papa came here and became sexton." And she smiled ruefully.

Wilson drank of his wine, and felt its warmth start to mount at once through his body. He noted that his companion was watching him covertly under her long, black lashes.

"*Mademoiselle,* may I be so bold as to ask your name? I am Private Arthur Wilson of the —th Infantry."

"And I am Marie Chippault," she replied, showing her white teeth.

"Marie—that is a very pretty name," said Wilson. There was gallantry in this wine. He drained his glass.

Marie quickly poured him another.

"Have you been here all through the German occupation?" he asked—not that he cared so much to know as that he wished to hear her voice again.

She had to pause a moment to figure out his meaning, then she replied:

"Yes, four years."

A strange lassitude was spreading over the American. He felt serene

and indifferent to things. He raised his glass to his lips with something of an effort, but only to sip at it. The girl noticed.

"Is it not good?" she asked anxiously.

Wilson mumbled acquiescence and drank the rest as the room and the pretty face swam about him, then——

HE STRAIGHTENED up slowly. It was dark. He did not know where he was. Ah, he was sitting in a chair! He put forth his hand. There was a table. He felt about. A bottle and a glass. Gradually the events of the day pieced themselves together.

"Marie!" he called "Marie!"

Silence, broken only by the sound of big guns not so far away, and the explosion of a shell somewhere outside.

Wilson's hand went to his brow. His head ached dully and his legs felt weak under him as he rose. He tried to figure it all out. He had not gone to sleep, for he had not been as tired as all that, and the two glasses of wine would not have made him drunk. Had he been drugged? No, for there was no reason—and yet he could not feel so sure.

"Marie!" he called again.

No reply. His hand fell to his holster. His automatic was still there. He felt his way dizzily to the door and outside. The cool September night air cleared his brain and steadied his limbs.

"Where is Marie, and why should she have drugged me?" was the question that flashed through his mind, and from somewhere down in his consciousness came the reply: "She is up in the clock tower."

Wilson's first thought was to go find some other Americans and lead them up into the tower. Those clock hands had not been moving for nothing. It was clear to him now that they were being used as a signal of some sort. But what had the girl to do with it?

She couldn't be a spy—*surely* she couldn't be—but if she were caught up there, she might have to pay the penalty of one. He shuddered at the vision of a slim figure, back to a stone wall, and a white-faced firing squad drawn up before. Did the Americans shoot spies — girl spies? He did not know, but somehow felt that he could not take the chance. This was wartime, and spies were dealt with summarily—that much he *did* know.

He strode across the courtyard and through the back door into the church.

If it had been dark within by daylight, it was pitch black now. The heavy walls muffled the gunfire, and he was in another world. His hobnailed shoes rattled on the stone floor with what seemed to his sharpened sense a horrible din. He sat down and took them off, then rose, made ready his automatic, and felt his way along.

He was soon hopelessly lost, with no idea which way he was going or where the door to the stairway was. Much as he disliked to, he drew out a match and lighted it, thus guiding his way rather accurately to the tiny room.

He paused and listened. No sound. He felt his way to the stairs and started up. What lay above, he did not even try to guess, but the dead silence and uncertainty caused his scalp to prickle and his breath to come quick and short.

On he went, feeling with his hands for each step, until he stood again on that first landing. He longed to see, but dared not light another match. He stood for what seemed a long time before he start-

ed up the second flight, then moved upward slowly and silently.

The smell of dust and must smote his nostrils vividly. The rumble of the guns sounded like the far-off drums of doom.

HE STOOD taut on the second landing.

If he had felt fear before, he was past it now. One hand clenched hard on the butt of his pistol. The other was a fist, and the arm was half crooked, ready to lash out with it.

His unshod feet surely were making no sound as he placed them so carefully one after another on the dust-covered boards, and yet he could not feel certain that any one lurking up above would not have heard him—or *felt* him—coming before now.

Why was he here, anyway? It was little concern of his if some one were moving the hands of the clock. Why had he come alone? If the French girl were a spy, he had little reason to wish to protect her. She meant nothing to him—and she had drugged him, for some reason or another. He was a fool to get himself into this sort of situation. Well, it was not too late to turn back and let the Intelligence do such investigating of the tower as it deemed necessary the next day. It was silly to suppose that he, alone, of several thousand men, had noticed the unnatural behavior of the clock's hands.

And yet he knew this was not so. The strange thing was that even *he* had noticed it.

As if to answer his other argument, the vision of the slender figure of the girl and the white-faced firing squad flashed across his consciousness.

He felt for the stairs and started up.

Suppose Marie were on the next landing—how could he tell? He couldn't scratch another match. Would she be armed? If so, he would be at her mercy—she would fire first, for he could not shoot her down. And would she be alone?

He faltered, then went on. He was cold and stubborn about it now. Life might end at any moment, but he was going to go through with what he had started.

The stairs ended and he pulled himself quickly erect on another platform. He knew he was not yet within the clock room.

He stood still. The hairs on the back of his neck seemed to itch and bristle.

He was not alone.

This was not imagination. He could see nothing, hear nothing, but he knew there was some one there on that platform with him. He knew it as surely as if that some one had him by the throat.

He did not try to think what he was going to do next. It is doubtful that he thought at all. He merely stood and waited, ready to strike.

The other waited, too. Not a sound to betray who or where it was.

Time ceased to be. Five seconds might have been five minutes—yes, or an hour.

Then from above came a man's whisper:

"Marie!"

So it was Marie here with him. He must get her out of this. It mattered not why she had come. He tried to whisper, merely breathe her name:

"Marie!"

But the word seemed to boom in the tense, hollow stillness of that black chamber.

A rush of feet, and he tangled arms and legs with an unseen ad-

versary, while some one came slipping and sliding down the stairway from above.

Wilson thrust his automatic into the other's ribs and pulled the trigger, but the pistol jammed and jerked itself from his fingers. He lashed out wildly with his fists, but he was at too close quarters. He struck and twisted in desperate fury, while the other's hot breath beat in his face. The shock of another body's hitting the two of them, bowled him over backward. Whole constellations flashed before his eyes as his head struck something hard. . . .

SOFT hands were stroking his forehead as he opened his eyes.

"Am I blind?" he mumbled.

"'Sh-h-h-h!" was the reply. "No, you are not blind. Do you not remember where you are?"

"In the tower, am I not?"

"Yes. Are you strong enough to follow me?"

"I think so." Then querulously: "But why should I follow you? I think I've done that too often, as it is!"

"Quiet!" the girl warned. "They left you for dead. If they hear you, they will make an end of it this time."

"Where are they?" He too whispered now.

"Down below, but I think we can get away — only, we must do it quickly, or——"

He felt her shudder.

He staggered to his feet. The back of his head hurt, but he could tell his strength was coming back.

"Lead on," he said.

The girl took his hand and pressed it so tightly that her nails hurt him as she pulled him slowly, carefully, after her.

They went to the stairway and down. At the first landing she stopped and listened, then led him step by step to the wall.

She guided his hands so that they fell upon rough wood and then an iron ring.

"Pull it open," she breathed.

It required all his strength to move the door on its rusty hinges, but he managed to do so a fraction of an inch at a time, so that no harsh grating would give them away. It was not as dark as in that dungeon of a tower, but he could make out only dimly that it was the comb of the church roof just outside.

He tugged at the door until there was space for him and the girl to pull their bodies through, and then drew it shut when they were outside.

"Hurry!" pleaded Marie, and she led the way along the comb. A misty rain had started to fall, and this made it slippery underfoot. Wilson more than once was dangerously near to losing his balance and hurtling down the steep roof. He feared for the girl and admired her fleetness and sureness of foot.

She paused about half way and waited for him.

"This is the place," she said. "Now, do just as I tell you, or you will dash to your death. We must slide down the roof and grasp that gargoyle as we reach the edge. Can you see it? It sticks up a little way."

Wilson strained his eyes, but could see nothing. He remembered now, though, having noticed those odd gargoyles of the church in Thiaucourt, extending up a foot or more above the eaves.

"If we miss it," the girl continued, "we plunge to the street. If we grasp it, we can go down the drainpipe that is right beside it. That will be easy. I shall go first."

Horror gripped the American.

"No, I'll not let you! It's suicide! We're safe now. We can wait until it gets lighter!"

"Yes, *we're* safe," she blazed at him, "but my parents — they are locked in a room that's mined, and the wires lead into the clock tower. The *boche* will blow them to bits when they find I have helped you to escape — unless we get there first!"

She sat down, picking her position carefully, and went on more calmly:

"It's our only chance. Slide straight down from this place. Hold your right arm out, ready to grasp the gargoyle when you feel it hit. Now I go. Count ten slowly, and follow."

And suddenly she was no longer with him.

IN TERROR he heard her go bumping down the roof. He strained his ears for the sickening thud of her body striking on the stones of the street far below, but at that instant the drumming of the artillery started again.

He took a grip on himself. He had forgotten to count. He judged he had missed about five counts, so he tolled off five more as deliberately as he could and let himself go.

Down he went.

The rough slate, the uneven lay of the ancient roof, threw him first to one side and then to the other, skinning his wrists. As he gathered speed, he tried to keep his right arm extended, but he was thrown over on it once and again.

Animal terror stepped in—sheer, selfish fear. Suppose he were a few inches too far off to the left? Suppose the girl had not started from the right place, bewildered by the darkness. Down—down——

He bit his lip, and tried to see. Would he never come to the edge? He was going fast. Could he hold if his arm hit?

Down, down, faster and faster. Instinctively he shut his eyes.

His arm struck something near the wrist, and he shot off into space, but not until his fingers had caught. His body swung around, and he grabbed desperately with the other hand.

He dangled from the eaves, his arms locked firmly about the gargoyle.

He hung on in breathless thanksgiving for a moment, afraid to move. Then he kicked around until his feet found the drain-pipe. It was rough and solid and easy to reach. Down he climbed. But what would he find at the bottom? He tried not even to think.

As he touched the ground, soft, slender arms were flung about his neck in an ecstatic gesture that almost maddened him, then as quickly he was free.

"Come!"—and the girl sped away

He felt weak and shaky, but he stumbled along after her as fast as he could. They reached the little house at the edge of the courtyard by a different way than that over which they had come that afternoon. She burst headlong through the front door, he after her.

SHE indicated the interior door to the right—the one she had steered him away from earlier.

"Break in!" she commanded hysterically. "They're in there!"

She threw her slight body against the door.

Wilson hurled his own weight against it. It barely yielded.

"Hurry, hurry!" the girl pleaded. "They may set off the mine any moment!"

"Get me an axe!" Wilson panted, and rammed into the door again.

She was gone and back almost

immediately. He grabbed the tool and fell to it manfully. Indistinct, excited chattering in French from within mingled with the crashing and splintering of wood as he burst through the barrier.

The old folk were half dragged into the street, and not a minute too soon. There was a dull roar from down in the wine-cellar, and the little building fell in a heap, while fragments of stone and tile rained down.

The girl, so brave and capable a minute before, crumpled weakly into Wilson's arms, and he thrilled at the touch of her. In a moment she was herself again and drew away from him in shame.

"That's what they have been threatening me with!" she said bitterly. "Making a traitor of me! But what could I do? With my parents prisoners in a mined house, I had no choice. I *had* to carry food and information to the tower —I *had* to entice you away when you were about to discover them at their signaling with the clock's hands—I *had* to drug you. I——"

For reply, Wilson grabbed her and kissed her full on the mouth, then sped away. He gathered a little band of American soldiers in less time than you would have thought it would take, and led them into the church and up into the tower.

The Germans were there—two of them. It was learned that their instructions had been to stay in the tower and manipulate the hands of the clock as a guide to their artillery until they were captured.

They were game fellows, and one of them was wounded before they were overpowered. Yes, and they went through with their part of the unpleasantness that occurred early the next morning very well.

WILSON went back to bid Marie *adieu*. He found her waiting for him. Together, they sat up most of the night in the corner of another courtyard, and he left her at dawn to join his company.

He came back to Thiaucourt after the war was over, but what he did, what she did—what both of them did, in fact—is another story.

Throwing Old Shoes After the Bride

THROWING old shoes after the bride seems to be a superstition rooted in a Jewish custom. Taking off the shoe was one of the ceremonies which in the old days accompanied the exchange of property, the bride being, in this case, the property. When the kinsman of Boaz consented to waive his claim upon the parcel of land which Naomi wanted to sell, in favor of Boaz, he "drew off his shoe," for "this was a testimony in Israel." Under Jewish law, the taking off of a shoe also marked the winding up of negotiations of any kind.

The Spy Master

A SERIES

By RICHARD WILMER ROWAN

V. The Muffled Volley

Von Karl's old rival, the huge Levantine, starts trouble for every one, including himself—and Diane and her American discover a great love.

I

IT HAD come to be said in the counter-espionage service that if Conrad von Karl were uncertain in his professed occupation of spying upon the Teutonic allies, he at least provided the best possible training course for those of us assigned to spy upon him. And in the dutiful process of watching over the Spy Master, it was agreed, Diane Duplessis and I

Overhead the searchlights criss-crossed as the great lamps raked the sky.

worked wonders surpassed by no other agents under the command of the gifted Bertrand.

However, during November and December of 1914, Von Karl was chiefly occupied in a vast but rather obscure diplomatic intrigue. In muddy Flanders ditches the allied British, French, and Belgians held the line—won the first battle of Ypres—beat back every desperate German thrust at the Channel ports. While in the East the Czar's armies pressed on after capturing Lemberg, provincial capital of Galicia. But Von Karl was concerned less with war

than with rumors of more war, devoting himself to the masters of Turkey and Bulgaria, of Italy and Rumania. He declared he would overthrow the influence of Von der Goltz Pasha, and openly aspired to outwit such ambassadors as Von Wangenheim and Prince von Bülow. So that Diane and I had little to do save listen to his boasting and marvel at his imagination, ruthless as ever, and restless, crafty, perverse.

It was late in January before he abandoned these activities for something even more dangerous and secretive. Diane and I were ordered back to Paris, whence she soon proceeded to Barcelona, for there the German espionage headquarters demanded a subtle and elaborate supervision.

PRESENTLY I was invited to undertake a trip into Germany. Being American and a volunteer, I was not ordered upon such a mission, but was politely asked if I would care to attempt it. Conrad von Karl was in Germany, said Bertrand, and he had requested that a good man be sent to coöperate with him—preferably myself.

Now, because the Spy Master strangely esteemed me and my amateur attainments as a secret agent, I had already been plunged into a succession of odd perils. Death had stalked me not once but many times since my first encounter with Von Karl at the sinking of the steam yacht *Achilles*. At poor little Du Parc's château before the battle of Guise; in Paris while the first Marne victory was being won; in Bucharest and beyond, when we fought off Gregor Marcolos and his bandit allies at that old Wallachian inn, had I been wounded twice and risked much more, because the most notorious adventurer in Europe found me companionable.

"I do not minimize your chance of being arrested, if you go," Bertrand scrupulously added. "The German counter-espionage is very efficient. Their police, especially in the industrial areas, we know to be very alert. And if you are taken . . ." He realized that I knew all about the penalties in time of war. His shrug passed over a grim conclusion. "I simply cannot urge you in this," he said.

"I am ready, sir. If you wish, I can start at once—to-night."

"Splendid!" He flashed upon me that smiling approbation which all of us who were privileged to serve under him had come to accept as the highest award.

Then he set forth my route into Germany, saying that I might enter via Holland—being supplied with the necessary credentials of an American free-lance writer—or I might be put over the frontier by airplane, starting from behind the French lines near Belfort.

Since my destination was Mannheim, I decided in favor of the journey through Holland. There was as yet no U-boat menace in the North Sea; and there was an immense commercial traffic between the Dutch ports and the industrial Rhineland, the British blockade being thus far very imperfect in its supervision of neutral cargo carriers.

I reached Rotterdam without event, and as the observant representative of an entirely imaginary syndicate of newspapers in North America, I made my uninterrupted way to the city of Cologne. Two days there I devoted to stupid and obvious sightseeing, which I hoped would reassure whatever police agent had been assigned to keeping track of me. Then I went on to

Frankfort, to Mainz and Darmstadt, and by this gradual approach reached Mannheim on February 8, 1915.

I HAD a good meal in a small restaurant and afterward strolled about till dusk, which came early at that time of year. My curiosity I displayed as unbounded but aimless, and if I was followed, the counter-spy shadowing me must have wondered at my vigor, while scorning my poor intelligence. However, as darkness came over the German city, my observations could only arouse suspicion. With little enough left unviewed, I could not pretend even a tourist's insatiable promenade in such light.

But from a guide-book I had learned by heart the plan of Mannheim's streets and had contrived my walk so that I was now close to the great *Badische Anilin und Soda Fabrik*, that chemical works which is almost a town in itself. It was running full blast, and I could linger and stare with legitimate interest. Essen—the Krupp factories—might surpass this, but Essen was virtually a military post, while here was the industrial backdrop of a mighty modern war revealed without scenic omissions.

Too late I discovered that gray-clad officer who bore down upon me with unmistakable resolve to ask questions. Mannheim too was observing martial law. I had blundered. A searching interrogation was the least I could expect. And if I failed to convince him——

On he came, his overcoat collar turned up, so that I could see only his eyes, which seemed to challenge me even at a distance. His cap he wore at a jaunty angle, and his polished boots gleamed with the myriad reflected factory lights. Rather a dandified type of officer, I thought, for any such duty, yet one the more likely to relish parading his authority before my alien eyes.

I was fumbling in my overcoat pocket, to have ready my passport and other papers of disguise, but to my amazement the other came to a crisp halt about three yards from where I stood. He saluted and then called me by name.

"You are Herr Richards?"

"Yes, Captain."

"The American newspaper correspondent?"

"The same, at your service, Captain. R. D. Richards, of Boston, U. S. A." Such was the identity chosen to convey me from Rotterdam to this dangerous spot. I attempted to project that breeziness of manner which most Europeans assign to the American male.

"You will have to follow me, please, Herr Richards," he said in his faintly accented English.

"Where to?" I demanded.

"Not far, sir. It is quite regular, I assure you," said he politely. "Come."

Of course, I followed. And turning on a smart heel, he swiftly led me off in the direction from which he had come.

WE SWUNG round a corner. This street was darker, and my guide's pace increased amazingly. I kept up with him, but obediently maintained a position a little to the rear—thereby somewhat reassuring myself, since he never once glanced back at me or otherwise indicated that I was in his custody.

"Hurry," he called out at last, wheeling sharply, and I saw that he meant to enter a small brick dwelling. "In here—quickly," he said.

I gasped. He was unlocking the

door. I entered after him, and he shut the door again in haste and locked and bolted it.

"Don't you know me?" he asked.

And now I did.

"Von Karl!"

"So I am discovered?" he replied.

He had switched on a dim light, removed his cap and was turning down the high military collar.

"Your voice—now," said I, "and the eyes. But what a perfect disguise!"

He was complimented, and he chuckled, stripping off his gloves. Above an eyebrow there appeared that odd muscular twitching, one characteristic of the Spy Master's which he could never entirely subdue. But he had somehow touched up the coiling scar on his cheek, by which many knew him, and his usually swarthy countenance appeared ruddy and altogether Prussian.

"Captain Heinrich von Karlen of the Brandenburg Regiment—at *your* service, Herr Richards from Boston!" he exclaimed. And though we might have been followed, seen entering mysteriously here, and though our two lives might be at stake, yet he stopped to admire his military likeness in a small mirror on the wall near at hand.

"It is one of your best, I suppose," said I.

"So I believe," he answered with his customary blandness. "Years ago I realized that I must learn to appear as an officer of the German, Russian, French, or English armies—Italian, Spanish, and Turkish, too. But I think I mimic the Prussian Guardsman best, probably because I simultaneously admire and abhor him the most."

Here I ventured to remark that I had always thought disguise, except for brief emergencies as at Du Parc's château in August, a dangerous, conspicuous stratagem, and just the sort of thing a master spy would deride.

"Because fiction emphasizes disguise, you think life itself omits it? Why, my friend, only this morning as an Austrian staff officer I *inspected* the chemical works."

HIS manner changed abruptly and he said: "You and I have no time to waste. They are manufacturing gases in that huge laboratory out there, and quantities have lately been shipped to Essen. So we have to visit the Krupp munitions capital and learn just what it is that Frau Bertha's men are going to do with so much of the deadly stuff."

"Then it is poison gas?" I exclaimed.

"Of course it is—chlorine, benzyl bromide, bromacetone, and chloromethyl-chloroformate. Also, I think, methyl chlorosulphate——"

I begged him to stop, protesting that I retained only the vaguest remembrances of college chemistry.

"They are suffocating and tear gases," he said.

"Expressly forbidden by the Hague conventions, as far back as 1899," I reminded him.

Von Karl laughed gaily. "When you talk like that," he said, "you remind me of a politician I know, who is also attempting to be a staff officer. The Hague conventions were in time of peace. Now it is a time of war. The *Entente* will protest the uncivilized conduct of the enemy, but will at once have to start manufacturing poison gases—to use in self-defense.

"You see," he pursued with the utmost gravity, "I have a man here who worked in the *Badische* branch factory at Butirki, near Moscow. He tells me things—some things I am

not chemist enough to understand. But I know this—that here in their special and secret laboratory, he and his colleagues are already experimenting with a variation of ethylsulphide. They mean to obtain a blistering gas. And can you appreciate the sort of wounds that will inflict?"

Hearing of such matters suddenly made me feverish to be on the way to Essen. I wanted to start at once, without dinner, without removing my coat; but Conrad von Karl objected.

"You aren't ready for Essen," said he. "I have this snug little place here—and here the American press correspondent vanishes. They wouldn't permit any writing man within a mile of the Krupp works, blindfolded. Nor can I continue as an officer. The uniforms I have here we'd better burn. When we venture again from this house we must be a pair of convalescent veterans, or even something more decrepit and commonplace. To be safe, one of us really ought to have a wound, or a broken arm——"

He paused, and I read his thought.

"You are hinting," said I, "that I had better let you break a bone, rather than risk detection as an impostor—and be shot for it. Discounting the pain and inconvenience, I think I'd rather keep both hands free for a fight—which is what you usually lead me to."

Von Karl chuckled rather grimly. "Well, we'll discuss our injuries later," he said. "Follow me."

HE GUIDED me to a rear room on the first floor of the little house. It was strangely bare of furnishings, but there was a fireplace with a wood fire burning brightly and sending forth a very welcome warmth. To my complete astonishment Von Karl knelt before this in all the splendor of his Prussian uniform and began tugging away at two of the corner bricks near the mantel.

The bricks did not appear to move, but the fire did. With a slight mechanical grinding sound the blazing logs began to sink out of sight. And now I saw that the fire had rested upon a kind of metal tray, which was obediently disappearing into a pit beneath, down to a depth of perhaps three feet. Von Karl, still kneeling, took from an inside pocket a pair of heavy white cloth gloves. He put them on and then reached across the embedded fire and seemed to push heavily upon the back wall of the fireplace.

Instead of giving way, the bricks of this wall parted evenly and swung outward, revealing themselves as cunningly contrived double doors about twenty inches square, backed with metal plates and moving on noiseless hinges. And beyond I saw dimly the closet they had covered, which resembled a cell in some ancient castle, and from which Von Karl was dragging forth an ordinary steamer trunk, flat, dark brown, and sturdily banded.

He unlocked this and opened it, and I saw it was stuffed with German military apparel of every description.

"It will take time to burn all that," I said.

He was subtracting two infantry uniforms, one of which indicated the rank of corporal.

"You are right again, my friend," he answered. "The burning would be tedious, malodorous, and panicky. I can simply check this trunk in Frankfort, in the name of our old antagonist, Gregor Marcolos. If it is opened by chance and suspicions aroused, let the oily Gregor explain."

"Why not leave it there, behind the fireplace?" I ventured. "A closet so cleverly hidden away——"

"But I am only borrowing this house, you see. It originally belonged to Steiber—the founder of the Prussian espionage service. And what you call a closet, Steiber sometimes employed as an oven. An unwilling witness, tucked away in there, the doors shut, and then a crackling fire——" He shrugged. "It made them want to talk, I don't doubt."

But Steiber had died in 1882, and I had more immediate alarms than a dead man's notorious cruelties.

"DO YOU mean that this place has been known to the secret police for years," I cried, "and here we are, standing around, debating about a trunk!"

"One thing you overlook. I am supposed to be an ally of the German secret service."

It was the first time in all our association that Conrad von Karl had admitted to me what so many in Paris suspected—that he was a double agent, taking pay from both sides. I stopped to ponder his confession, while he stood beside the gaping trunk, observing me ironically.

"Where are you supposed to be—for the Germans?" I asked him.

"Steinhauer fondly imagines me in Switzerland, coöperating with Von Meyer," he said with the assurance of one to whom treachery is only a part of the desperate game. "Why do you worry about that, my friend? My honor, you know, is something no American could discern with a microscope. It has shriveled from disuse——"

"I'm not worrying. I have a plan," said I.

"About invading Essen at once?"

"Yes. Report me to the German counter-espionage as a suspicious person, say you followed me from Geneva or Berne—that you believed, if you watched me closely enough, I might show you the trail to a considerable plot. That will account for my venturing near the Krupp works, and will also explain your deserting Switzerland."

"But the risk to you?" he exclaimed, and I do not think he pretended the admiration his tone revealed. "If I denounce you, what chance will you have?"

"A better chance than if I put on a German uniform. And, besides, you will be able secretly to help me," I argued. "You will maintain your standing as a German agent. Whereas, if we leave here together in disguise, I become a burden to you—and the detection of one is the detection of both."

The Spy Master came and gripped my hand. "I am famous for my audacity," he said. "But you, my friend, are magnificent. In Europe your reputation will match mine, if you live."

This curious blend of compliment and candor disconcerted me. We were proposing to outwit the German secret service by a scheme which would magnify my own danger for a time. He changed into civilian dress with fastidious deliberation, while I nervously urged that we make haste to be on our way from Mannheim.

II

I DID not go directly to Essen, but continued on to Wesel, as though I might be intending to return to Holland. Von Karl had ostensibly "shadowed" me from Cologne, and I left it to his great ingenuity to explain to the counter-

espionage officer how he had heard of me in Switzerland.

At Wesel the Germans had an espionage school. A number of rather shady characters—neutrals mostly—came and went in the town, and many strange nationalities were represented among the recruits for the dangerous spy service in France and England. It was not unlikely, we had thought, that I might be approached and asked to consider undertaking some Teutonic assignment in my journalistic travels.

The police officials I found clumsily indifferent and bland. Von Karl had already warned them against me, that was obvious. And in keeping with the counter-spy practice of letting a suspect feel unwatched and at ease, these worthy policemen were putting me off my guard with a kind of ludicrous stealth. My papers were glanced at with more apparent carelessness than any German authority ever displayed in time of peace. I was practically exempted from having to answer any inconvenient inquiries relative to my trip to Mannheim. My baggage, I was informed, need not be inspected unless I decided to cross the Dutch frontier.

But at the hotel where I stayed, my bags and all my possessions were constantly and minutely examined, and by a hand so painstaking and tidy I left it to him to put my things in order whenever I went out. Indeed, I never did go out except to accommodate this secret agent, who must, I knew, make frequent reports. Von Karl and I had agreed that I should keep to my room, feigning illness in order to make good, to a degree, his description of me as an American peculiarly unburdened with honest or urgent occupation. I was supposed to be tarrying in Wesel until joined by one or more confederates. I must be observed but not alarmed. And meanwhile the crafty Spy Master would punctuate his supervision of me with numerous raids upon the secrets of Essen.

It had come in the course of three days to seem anything but dangerous, this comedy of spy and counter-spy which Von Karl and I extemporized. I saw him only once, from a distance, conferring gravely with an elderly German who stayed at my hotel and, presumably, directed those who kept me ever in view. Most of my meals I took in my room, eating bountifully, as the measures of food control were not in force. I never lacked for any service, but was amused and annoyed by the attentions of hotel waiters and chambermaids, old and young, respectively, who were overzealous in watching me and elected to stroll in at all hours, reducing my privacy to an immodest minimum.

I read, pretended concern for my health, and ate and drank and languished. On the fifth day I was wondering how I might hear from Conrad von Karl, whether he was meeting with the success his effrontery so largely assured, and also whether I might yet have the chance to see the Krupp works myself.

I took a short walk after dinner, going slowly and not far, and leaning weakly upon a cane. Accustomed to every surveillance, courting it, I yet had now a shiver of foreboding, absurd but recurrent. I was being shadowed, of course, but there seemed to-night a sinister something that crept at my heels and threatened me from out of the dark and unknown.

Ashamed of my alarm, I tried not to hurry in returning to my hotel. But throughout the evening I could

not read or sit at ease. My sense of danger and of complete isolation in a foreign and hostile land was engulfing me.

AT PRECISELY 11:15 I was arrested. I had been in bed perhaps half an hour, but sleep was far away, when there came a gentle and almost apologetic rapping upon my door. I sprang up, put on the light, and called out to inquire the errand of my disturber.

"Official. Open, if you please, Herr Richards," said a voice in accented English.

My thought was—Von Karl! At last, some word from the master conspirator! And how characteristic of his brazen brand of plotting, to use the German police to bring me his command or warning.

But when I had opened my door the uniforms I saw were soldiers' uniforms. No police, but a corporal and a private in field gray had come to take me prisoner. The corporal and spokesman was more courteous than his mission required. He advised me to dress myself warmly, seeming to suggest that I might not again occupy such comfortable quarters for some time to come.

The two men waited stolidly while I clothed myself. They accepted cigarettes, but volunteered nothing after having displayed the order of my arrest. I noticed that it was countersigned by a major of the military police. And what did this ill-fortune indicate for Von Karl? I knew him to be an absolutely unscrupulous player of an international game so subtle as to be almost beyond normal comprehension. That, cornered, he would sacrifice anything or anybody in behalf of his own security, I had understood from our first meeting, and I had accepted that fact as my chief hazard when I set forth from Paris to coöperate with him.

My suddenly being taken into custody like this, I felt sure, related to some mistake he had made, some final and preposterous piece of overconfidence, or some accident enmeshing him and beyond his control. Wrapped in a heavy overcoat, I now followed my captors from the room. They paused until I stood between them, and then abreast we proceeded briskly down the stairs and out from the German inn.

In the darkness an impressive figure loomed up before our little party.

"Prisoner, come with me," said this functionary, who wore a cape and officer's cap and spoke gruffly in German.

"I am an American citizen," I said, deciding to begin some self-defense. "This is not a military zone. Only civil authorities have a right to detain me. I demand to see the American consul."

THE reply I got to this was almost a snarl, but oddly enough my spirits bounded at once. Said the officer: "Fool! It is too dark to see an American consul."

The soldiers snickered. The other's Germanic accents were still guttural and strange. But I knew him to be the Spy Master. Only Von Karl would make that wildly irrelevant remark under such circumstances—and in that way warn me.

As my anxiety vanished away, I found it difficult to maintain the pose of a resentful and resolute Yankee.

"Your activities are known to me, Herr Richards," he snapped. "Come along. You will get a hearing, and then the consul of your country can be summoned."

The arch-impostor and his two trusting guards led me to a motor car they had left a little way beyond the hotel. Von Karl's imperious gesture indicated that we must proceed in haste.

"But, Excellency," the corporal ventured, "do we not go with Lieutenant von Halz and the sergeant?"

"They are watching for the others."

"The others, Excellency?"

"Fool, you have your orders. Get into the car. The lieutenant may have to watch here all night. We have found the man we want."

Yet, contrary to all discipline, these soldiers hesitated to obey. And it seemed to me that they were suspicious, that Von Karl had overdone his explanation. For whenever did a Prussian of the rank he pretended stop at midnight to argue with a corporal?

Von Karl too must have diagnosed his own blunder. He snapped out a volley of oaths. He barked at me, and I cowered a bit to help the show. Both soldiers came to attention.

"Into the car," said the Spy Master, and I meekly obeyed, setting the others an example.

I sat in the middle, with the corporal on my left. The private was to act as chauffeur. The car was a Benz. Soon we were speeding away as though demons pursued.

WE HAD left Wesel a kilometer behind when suddenly Von Karl cried out for a slower pace.

"That tire is flat," he said to our driver, and indicated the rear wheel nearest him.

I thought the soldier would disagree. But whatever his opinion, he promptly got out to examine the tire in question.

"Do you need a light?" Von Karl queried.

"No, Excellency—and the tire seems all right——"

"It is flat, I tell you. I felt the jar of a puncture." Von Karl leaned over the side of the tonneau to gesture. "See there!" His right arm moved, and I thought I caught a flash of metal in his hand. "There, fool!" His voice thundered, but did not utterly drown the sickening thud of the blow he struck.

The driver, hit in the temple, collapsed on the road, groaning.

"Excellency!"

The corporal, every suspicion reawakening, started up from his place by my side.

"Here, you!" Von Karl addressed him with the utmost disdain. "Get out and see what is the matter with this fellow."

But the corporal's retort showed he would not be easily cowed again. I, the unconsidered civilian, was no longer of consequence in a quarrel of uniformed men. He went to pass in front of me, and I thrust out my feet and tripped him.

He fell forward, cursing, and put out both hands to save himself. Von Karl's right arm moved again with that terrible quickness, up and down, and the revolver butt struck the corporal a shattering blow on the side of the head. He fell in a heap, doubled up limply against Von Karl's knees. But together we managed to lift him into the road and there put him down beside his stricken comrade.

"It wasn't safe to shoot, and I had no knife," the Spy Master apologized. "If you hadn't tripped him, I believe he would have tried to throttle me. Some of these chaps must have fearful grudges against officers."

I asked if the pair of them were badly hurt. Von Karl assured me

each would revive. And he proved that he believed this by taking their belts and braces and binding them tightly together, back to back.

"Rather crude first-aid," he observed, "but in this instance, my friend, the aid is only shared between us."

Our prisoners were moved off to one side, where no following vehicle would strike them. Then Von Karl took the wheel, I got in beside him, and the Benz rolled away swiftly, carrying us toward Essen.

VON KARL did not continue our mad pace after we had got some distance off from the scene of the undoing of the two soldiers.

"We'll go slowly hereafter," he explained, "and attract as little attention as possible. There are lots of war plants in this vicinity, and most of them work night shifts. We are in no hurry, till after dawn."

I asked for an explanation and he gave it.

"That fat renegade, Marcolos, is around," he said. "I knew I'd be sure to run into him, and there would be no chance of making him believe I had come from Switzerland to pursue you. He'd probably know I never was in Switzerland.

"Being as afraid of me as he is," he boasted, "you can wager on it that he tries to keep informed about me. Having you seized, taken by surprise, as I said, at night—that seemed to me the quickest and surest way of getting you with me. There is going to be some kind of remarkable demonstration with that poison gas near Essen to-morrow, and we must witness whatever occurs," he added.

I was altogether mystified both as to our exact destination and our present whereabouts. Von Karl, however, was leading our expedition with his customary self-assurance. He drove very moderately for three hours, then pulled in at the side of the road, and consulted a map with his pocket torch.

"Just where I expected," he said. "A little way beyond, over there, is a stream. The car goes into it. So do your clothes. We'll weight them with a stone. Fortunately I brought along, after all, two of the uniforms I had ready there in Mannheim." He held open his officer's cloak and I saw that he was dressed in the uniform of the infantry. "I'm sorry to make you change in this temperature, but it's necessary."

So change I did, and in record time, after he had taken the bundle from under the seat where he had it hidden and unrolled it before me. The boots were uncomfortably large, but otherwise the outfit measured me as closely as army regulations allow. Von Karl swore I made an altogether authentic German private.

We then drove on till we came to the stream he sought. Of course, it was frozen over at this season. But he blandly declared he had counted upon that.

"They may trace the car to where it goes through the ice. But our bodies," he chuckled, "will not be hoped for till a spring thaw."

On many occasions I have seen him do adroit and daring things, risking his life and confounding opposition. Here he was opposed by Nature herself, and by a dark night. We listened until we were sure no one else moved in our neighborhood. Then he deliberately guided the car down the bank and swung it out upon the frozen stream. The ice began to crackle and give way beneath such weight. Von Karl stood on the running board, increased the motor's speed, and then jumped

clear. We stood on the bank and with his torch watched the Benz grind and crash and flounder for perhaps fifty yards—until, at last, the engine weight broke through and a space of turbulent water appeared where the ice had shattered, fragments leaping up, and the machine sank.

WE WALKED along the bank of this small Rhine tributary, till we came opposite the spot where our vehicle had disappeared. My outer attire as a civilian had been rolled up tightly and weighted. Being a leader in all things, Von Karl elected to make the toss. The bundle, caroming from a block of floating ice, went down with hardly a splash, and such safety as I derived from my American citizenship went with it. In German uniform I was a spy, and, if detected, no consul's protest would mitigate my guilt.

Still boldly using his electric torch, Von Karl led me back to the highway.

"We'll walk briskly," he suggested, "because it is cold. There is really no hurry. At daybreak we'll cut across country."

And so we trudged along in our gray disguises. I found the steel-shod field boots very helpful on the icy path, but they seemed to weigh a ton each, and I learned, too, that loose footwear is nearly as painful in marching as a too snug fit would be. Von Karl, however, was most considerate. He noticed my limping and repeatedly ordered a halt; and at last—about 4:30—he guided me across a field and over a hill, and then declared that we had come far enough.

There was a stone shed here which offered a degree of shelter. Von Karl produced a flask of brandy and urged me to fortify myself against catching cold, adding in jest: "A spy who at any critical moment is likely to sneeze might just as well give himself up. His arrest is inevitable."

Shortly afterward I dozed off, though my position in a corner of the hospitable shed was incredibly cramped. I awoke—as it seemed—a moment later. But it was well after daybreak now. Von Karl stood by, grinning; and I realized gratefully that he had stayed awake and on guard while I abandoned all concern for the hostile countryside.

"See here," he said, with a certain caution.

I struggled to my feet very stiffly and peered out and around the shed, as he directed. Soldiers! Not five hundred metres away a considerable body of troops—infantry, horsemen, artillery, motor transport, mounted officers—was proceeding along the slope of the hill.

"Why didn't you wake me at once," I protested, "before we were cut off?"

Von Karl laughed at my ignorance.

"We aren't cut off," said he. "They never heard of us, my friend. Even German thoroughness does not pursue me with cannon."

"But see!" I cried. "They are halting."

"I hope so," he said. "After all our trouble and that walk. Just keep out of sight—and wait."

WE WAITED nearly an hour. More troops appeared, and finally that most unexpected of units, a band. Then, running smoothly over the frozen ground, there came a procession of staff cars. A brilliant array of officers descended from them. Von Karl

was now cautiously using binoculars, and he offered them to me with a sly gesture, exclaiming: "What more can you ask of life? Behold!"

I leveled the glasses on the group of officers who had last arrived. The first and most prominent of them was not to be mistaken. I had seen too many portraits and photographs. It was the German emperor himself!

"Then it is something momentous with the poison gas," said I.

"As I told you. This is an impromptu and very closely guarded artillery range. By arriving on the scene in advance of the guards we elude their watchfulness," the Spy Master explained. "See there—the guns are ready."

He directed my gaze beyond the Kaiser's party. I discerned a .77 field piece, a naval gun, and a 15 cm. howitzer, that most effective item of German ordnance.

"And now the targets — look there!"

I saw three small flocks of sheep at a range of about fifteen hundred metres, peacefully grazing upon cunningly prepared artificial pastures which dotted another slope. They were doomed, I knew, and they seemed absurdly spring-like as they clustered off there on the chill and barren range.

"Now!" Von Karl exclaimed.

I heard a trumpeter shrilling a call that was strange to me. Perhaps it had been composed for the occasion, to threaten the sheep and all the regiments of the *Entente* which these flocks represented here.

In quick succession the field gun, the howitzer, and the naval gun were fired. We could see the shells exploding close to the sheep, but not near enough to kill them with shrapnel. Nor was this an exhibition of shrapnel. Immediately after each explosion a sickly cloud of yellowish-green smoke arose from the shell-burst, and floated toward the startled sheep. It spread over them and grimly blanketed each little pasture. And when it cleared again nothing alive remained where the sheep had been. The three targets of transplanted verdure appeared to have been scorched. Von Karl handed me the binoculars once more, and I stared aghast at the devastated flock and the ground all about, which seemed to be coated with rust.

III

THE military witnesses of this astounding spectacle were cheering now, and the band was playing *"Deutschland über Alles."* The shouting and music came to us where we hid with all the impact of that deadly exhibition.

"Well, it means the end of the war, my friend," Conrad von Karl observed.

I turned and faced him.

"And do you propose to elect the winning side?" I inquired.

He smiled and was not at all insulted, knowing well enough the predictions about his turncoat tendency which had been made in Paris and wherever else he was known.

"The Allies can manufacture gas shells abundantly, if they learn the trick in time," he responded.

"And they will pay handsomely for the warning," said I.

Which made him laugh and say he had not asked Bertrand to send me into Germany at the risk of my life, merely to make sure of temptation.

"But," he added, "I think I could get a hundred thousand francs bonus for delivering a fragment of one of those shells."

"If we wait till night——" I began.

"The pursuit from Wesel will be upon us by then," said he. "No. We have these uniforms for just this necessity. Follow me."

And boldly he went forth from the shelter of the stone shed, proceeding in full view of the assembled officers and men. I followed him with the spine-tingling, chill sensation of one who expects to be shot in the back. Head up, Von Karl strode across the field like any good soldier intent upon obeying an order. And we were not even challenged. So many uniformed men were now scattered about that the presence of two detached infantrymen was obscured by the martial scene.

AT last we had come round to the other side of the hill, about midway between the guns and the suffocated sheep; and here we had some respite. Von Karl turned back to consult me, but also—childishly, in a crisis—to boast about his foresight in providing common soldiers' outfits rather than the more conspicuous trappings of officers.

"We can't get near the sheep without attracting attention," he pursued, "but I have a plan whereby we may obtain a piece of shell with less exposure."

He led off now to the right, keeping the hill between us and the imperial bodyguard. Then, hurrying, he swung around in a great arc, until we were exposed to view again, but now almost a thousand metres from the Kaiser, his staff and guards and the deadly cannon. I was suddenly startled to discover on a knoll nearby a German soldier who watched us curiously.

But the Spy Master never let himself be startled. He began to ascend the knoll straightway, making directly for this puzzled sentinel. Again I followed, supporting with blind faith a leader whose project seemed mad. And to equalize the impending struggle, the German was joined by another soldier, a sergeant-major, who appeared to pop up out of the ground.

I realized that there was a pit on the top of the knoll, and that these men were in some way importantly concerned with the firing of the artillery. Von Karl, without waiting for an inquiry, addressed the sergeant-major, who was a big blond fellow with a face that became oddly comic when registering suspicion.

"A message," said Von Karl. "You are commended by His Imperial Majesty." Which extravagant falsehood seemed almost to asphyxiate both men.

"But what—what have we done?" the big one stammered.

"You saw the sheep die," said Von Karl, who liked a sluggish mind to sharpen his wit upon.

"Who are you? Where is the message?" the other demanded, resorting to discipline when utterly confused.

Von Karl, I saw, had a small folded piece of paper ready in his right hand. He saluted and I saluted after him. The sentry and the non-commissioned officer saluted. Von Karl held out his bit of paper.

Unfolding it laboriously, without taking off his thick gloves, the sergeant-major stared at nothing. The paper was blank, and he said so with rising anger.

"Then the ink has faded," said Von Karl. "It is that secret ink—a captain of the staff wrote it. See there—it was right there. Try blowing your breath upon it." And

in helpful vein the Spy Master stepped close to the big soldier, pointing and explaining.

"Hoo-woouf!" From the barrel-like chest a hurricane of breath was blown upon the innocent paper. Von Karl stood by anxiously, encouraging the sergeant-major to try again. He did and was nearly breathless, and then Von Karl said: "Here, give it to me!" But instead of snatching the paper he gave the other a prodigious push, thrusting him back upon the sentinel and adding momentum in a second desperate drive, until both of them toppled backward into the pit from which they had emerged.

I ran up, dragging my pistol from its holster. Von Karl stood nonchalantly on the rim of the pit, his revolver already out and threatening.

"Would you mind," he said to me, "jumping down and taking their guns and tying them up? And please hand me up that flag."

All these bland requests I attended to as quickly as I could. The sergeant-major had fallen upon his companion and knocked all the wind out of him, and himself had sustained a sprained ankle over which he cursed and muttered. But he did not struggle or shout, as I had feared he might; Von Karl's unique ruse of having the big fellow winded when he attacked him was still yielding a dividend when I tied the last hard knot in his bonds.

Meanwhile, with undiminished recklessness, Von Karl was using the signal flag to instruct the distant Prussian gunners. And what fate this might bring down upon us I did not dare to ponder.

"Stay here and guard those two," he called to me. "And don't worry if shells begin whizzing this way. It will all be part of the trick. I'll be back directly."

BEFORE I could ask a question he had hurried away. I peered over the edge of the pit, which was a little more than five feet deep. I seemed to see a considerable commotion around the guns, so I borrowed the binoculars of my captive, the sergeant-major—they were nearly as powerful as Von Karl's—and now I saw that the imperial party had gone. They must be circling behind the hill, to reach the highway, just as Von Karl and I had done in gaining this knoll I was on. But if so, by the direction he had taken, the Spy Master would walk right into them.

My concern for him was abruptly disturbed by a distant report, a faint puff of smoke, and the simultaneous scream of a shell, which passed a bit to the right and burst not over two hundred metres from where I stood. No wonder my captives had occupied a pit. And how, I wondered, had Conrad von Karl persuaded the gunners, by signals, to begin spattering the range with gas shells after the Kaiser and other important spectators had left?

Another shell!

This one landed a little further off. My speculations were not renewed, however, for right after the nasty yellowish green burst, I heard the sound of motor cars and discovered the formidable gray convoy of the imperial staff coming round from behind the hill.

My action was instinctive. I clambered out of the signalmen's pit and crawled as if in No Man's Land down the slope in the direction I deemed to be safe. As for my orders—why stand guard over two soldiers, when forty generals are riding dangerously near? To

try to help Von Karl personally was out of the question. He had talents known all over Europe for helping himself. My assistance might only prove a hindrance, I knew; and, as circumstances turned out, he really was better off without me.

Lying prone and obscure, upon very hard and very cold ground, behind a pile of earth flung up by some earlier explosives tested on this range, I was permitted to watch Conrad von Karl at work in one of his most daring moods. As the staff cars came on they were definitely in the new line of fire. Suddenly a soldier—it was Von Karl—flung himself frantically in their path, shouting:

"Turn back! Take care! Save His Majesty!"

I could hear him distinctly, for the wind carried his voice in my direction. Those in the motors seemed more impressed by his excited pantomime. A smart young aide-de-camp stood up in the first car and held up his hand. The procession halted with a grinding of brakes. The aide leaped out briskly and ordered Von Karl to approach.

I held my breath now, for surely there must be some one among this gilded throng who knew the Spy Master by sight—perhaps intimately. However, Von Karl's histrionic talent was never so acute as when all else seemed lost; and once again it saved him, for he appeared to the life like an ordinary soldier of the line, resolved to do his duty, though not brave enough to be unafraid of the great.

I could see him explaining something about the shell-fire and altered aim of the distant gunners. He pointed to the knoll I had so luckily vacated and I thought I heard him exclaiming: "Spies, Herr Captain! I saw them there myself, Herr Captain."

To the dauntless all things will rally—and as if to prove his artless alarm, the howitzer crew chose this moment to fling over a shell that burst intolerably close to where I lay, so that I now held my breath to save myself, lest the acrid, poisonous fumes be blown upon me.

When I dared to look again there was vast agitation afflicting the emperor's suite. A soldier stood on the side of the knoll and wigwagged frantically. Another, a dispatch rider, had turned back on his motorcycle and was speeding to confirm the signaled "Cease firing."

And had Conrad von Karl escaped in the confusion? No! My glasses found him readily enough. He stood at attention, a veteran, all discipline and iron. The Kaiser had graciously alighted from his great gray car. He was evidently captivated by the hero. I saw him hold out his hand—and Von Karl, a peasant overwhelmed, wiped his on his tunic before accepting the imperial compliment.

A tall and arrogant-looking general, following His Majesty's command, pinned the Iron Cross on Von Karl's breast before the ceremonial was complete. . . .

I CONTINUED to hide for nearly an hour, and saw a patrol of the bodyguard take the captive sergeant-major and his comrade from the pit on the knoll and carry them away for medical care and questioning. It was afternoon before I located Von Karl again. He had managed to change to civilian clothes. He looked like a very grimy and decrepit peddler, and in the pack on his back he carried an outfit for me and three fragments of gas shell, each carefully wrapped in oil silk—and worth more than

their weight in gold to the chief of espionage in Paris.

"We can't get through to Holland," he told me. "That Von Halz, the lieutenant who was with me last night when we sought to take you—the dangerous spy—by surprise, has reported your escape. He thinks you polished me off with the two military policemen. A great fighter, this Herr Richards!"

"But when those two we left by the roadside are found, they will disclose what happened, involving you, too."

"They have been found, I learn from—a friend," said he. "But it seems I hit them harder than I thought. They have not been questioned——"

"Dead?"

"Very unconscious. Their memories will perhaps be faulty for weeks."

He then described how we must make our way, traveling only by night, to Strassburg, where he could come into contact with the French secret service and send on the pieces of gas shell without delay.

That night, having had but one meal, we walked more than fifteen miles, despite the handicap of a snow storm. I was utterly exhausted when we finally halted. Von Karl seemed astoundingly fit and eager to push on. He found me shelter in a barn, vowing that only women remained on the place and that he had paid them well.

He said he would do a little scouting while I slept and would return in the afternoon with supplies. Actually he pushed on to Düsseldorf, and when he did return it was past sunset. He had brought food and also a conveyance, a brand new ammunition camion intended for immediate delivery at the front. And in this we journeyed to Strassburg in one night and a morning, crossing the Rhine at Coblenz. Halfway between Worth and Strassburg we abandoned the truck, after removing one wheel to suggest an accident and the driver gone for help; and so we entered the fortified chief city of Lorraine on foot just at dusk, which was the safest time, for Von Karl said that here there was a virtual state of siege, and the police surveillance never relaxed.

TO ME it seemed that the city was one huge hospital. Red Cross flags were on the Imperial Palace, the public library, on schools and hotels and large private residences. The Orangerie was thronged with convalescent wounded; there were cots in the large Park Restaurant; and even the wondrous old sandstone Cathedral with its lace-like spire had also its hospital flag, though Von Karl said there was wireless on the spire, and I saw armed sentries patrolling the tower which dominates the region to the Vosges.

The Spy Master guided me to a small and obscure restaurant, where, said he, we could at once get in touch with French spies. The place seemed innocent enough when we entered, and our waiter shuttled between indifference and open hostility. Of course, we looked very German and might be secret police. But Von Karl suddenly cleared the air of dark suspicion by saying to me: "I don't think thirty people could eat here at once."

He spoke in German, of course. French was not permitted in public in Alsace-Lorraine. But our waiter, an old chap who must have remembered Sedan, became immediately more attentive, while carefully refraining from cordiality.

I still saw none with whom Von Karl would be likely to communicate. There were six other diners, a shabby half-dozen. The seventh to join us was a woman, apparently young, but veiled and in heavy mourning, which was no strange sight in the Empire that winter. I could not see her face, for when she seated herself and lifted the veil, her back was toward me. Yet something about her, despite the cheap black garments and ghastly hat, suggested some one I knew—a Frenchwoman or American, some one debonair and clever, charming and *chic*.

I ate with relish, but I didn't cease to watch her until Von Karl gave me a warning nudge. I looked up, and at the same time noticed that the woman was bowing her head, perhaps in anguish, and quickly lowering her veil.

THE doorway of the small restaurant was now asurge as a grotesque leviathan of fat in masculine guise entered to dine—or to spy upon the diners. And there was no mistaking so much suet in motion. I saw Von Karl put down his knife and fork.

The newcomer stared at the woman in black, but passed her by. He had seen us and was now making his heavy way directly toward our table. It was the Levantine mongrel, Gregor Marcolos, many a time discomfited by the Spy Master, and now his inveterate foe. Had he recognized Von Karl on the instant? It seemed more than probable. For such hate as his would find an adversary in the dark, would burn through any masquerade.

As yet, though, no hate was visible in him. He wallowed when he walked like a foundering barge, and plodding toward us he brushed aside a chair which the waiter offered, never moving his gaze from the odd one at our table. Doubt suddenly invaded me. Could it be possible that my companion had intended to meet Marcolos here to-night—that their old enmity was buried or had never been more than an elaborate sham to help them manipulate some deep intrigue?

I stole a glance at our neighbor, the woman in mourning, and perceived how tensely she was sitting, waiting. When I looked toward Von Karl his expression dismissed my doubts. He was alert but admirably poised, his attention far off, his face, except for the slight twitching above the eyebrow, having never a shadow of concern.

But he was sitting now with both hands in his lap, and underneath the shabby napkin I knew that he had ready a revolver with which to kill his hulking enemy.

IV

"*MESSIEURS?*"

To ask our permission in French was like the firing of a gun. Everybody in the restaurant, with two exceptions, turned and stared. But the woman did not; nor did one queer-looking, spectacled little man by the door. And him I put down as the police spy present—trying to listen and affect indifference; too stupid to know that in a group or crowd one acts with the majority to hide as an individual.

Von Karl too, who missed nothing, had remarked this little man's blunder. In replying to Marcolos he spoke a gruff German, telling him curtly he might sit with us if that were his peculiar desire.

Then the Spy Master picked up a spoon with his left hand and began to stir a most uninviting cup

of coffee. Marcolos sat down, and the chair groaned. Von Karl's right hand was not in view. But I suddenly saw Marcolos shudder, and I could scarcely restrain a chuckle.

How often before had this same drama occurred, the Levantine endeavoring to pounce upon Von Karl and losing his nerve at the first critical juncture? I had seen the play twice, and there must have been many another performance. I could guess now that Von Karl had simply jabbed the muzzle of his automatic into the other's bulky leg. Marcolos showed a trembling hand when he accepted the soiled menu.

BY the door the odd little man was finishing in haste. He called to the waiter, spoke loudly about his having need to hurry home, paid his bill, and darted away. The woman in black watched his going with a certain anxiety, and I could almost imagine her half turning around to warn us.

"Friend Gregor," said Von Karl in English, "if you came here on purpose, you are a fool, and if by accident, you are unlucky. Don't order, we are going. Bound to your feet, my man, or digest a pellet of lead."

Marcolos stood up, his yellowish face now traced with sickly tints of green of the color of the gas shell bursts we had seen at Essen. But he uttered no word of protest as we escorted him to the door. He seemed resigned to whatever fate our going forth portended; and no doubt the acute mind of Conrad von Karl had been counting upon this Oriental streak of fatalism.

Von Karl had handed the waiter ten marks in passing, so that none in the restaurant impeded our sudden exit. But when we were covered by the darkness of the street I looked back and saw the young woman in the mourning veil appear in the lighted doorway. Clearly she wished to follow us. But this gave me no fresh alarm, for from the first I had counted her an ally.

My companions were continuing their absurd encounter, with the Spy Master firing a whispered volley of questions at Gregor Marcolos, and that mountainous intriguer maintaining a deathly silence.

"Have you forgotten how I induce conversation?" Von Karl snapped. And again Marcolos shuddered, like a gigantic jelly describing an earthquake. "I can't understand you tonight, Gregor," Von Karl pursued. "Why come and sit *in front* of me? Where were your wits? If you had found a seat behind me, don't you know, you would have had an immense advantage while that silly little police agent sat there with his ears pinned back.

"Perhaps he was not so silly, Conrad."

Marcolos spoke with a gulp. Recalling his gluttony, I wondered if even now his chief emotion was not a longing for the dinner we were denying him.

But Von Karl had stopped to listen. He held out his hand in the dark to warn me.

"A patrol of gendarmes," he whispered. He turned again upon the fat Marcolos. "Lie down," he said.

I sensed rather than saw that he was jabbing the bulky Levantine with his revolver. Marcolos whimpered.

It was cold, and the police were coming to take us, warned by the spy who had hurried out of the restaurant; but Von Karl calmly prepared for battle. He forced Marcolos to lie down on his side

like a rampart, behind which he and I would defend the entrance of an alley that offered us the only handy avenue of escape.

The plodding double-quick of the police was now staccato on the crisp night air. We crouched, breathless, Marcolos stifling terror-stricken groans; and all of a sudden a dark figure loomed up beside us.

"HERR VON KARL—Herr Richards!" It was the young woman in mourning. But her voice! No wonder I had found her walk and gestures familiar! It was Diane Duplessis of the French secret service!

"Oh, my dear!" I had sprung up, our hands met magnetically in the gloom—and on impulse, and for the first time in our lives, I kissed her. . . .

Danger and death came toward us at the double; but it was the moment fate had chosen to reveal to us simultaneously that we were in love. Von Karl, who delighted in all romance, interfered with genuine apologies. In a few words he told Diane how he proposed to escape arrest, and urged that she continue on her way from the restaurant without seeming to know or to have met us.

"But you are helpless!" she cried. "Two men with revolvers, in a city full of soldiers. They'll hunt you down and kill you, saying that you resisted arrest."

"We intend to resist," Von Karl retorted. "Now, please, dear girl, hurry on and take this." He gave her a paper parcel that he took from inside his coat. I knew it was one of the precious fragments of gas shell.

"No," she defied him. "You must all come with me. Here, this way."

But just then the patrol of German police swung round the corner. A formidable adversary, as Diane had predicted. Two leaders on each flank were flashing electric torches whose powerful beams thrust into every shielding shadow. They were not a hundred metres away; in another half minute—closer; in another ten seconds——

"Oh!"

The cry of Gregor Marcolos was, I think, not treachery, but abject fear.

Von Karl did not attempt to punish him. But on the instant the Spy Master raised his revolver and fired four shots, his aim never more deadly. Both of the men with the lights were hit, and those searching instruments crashed to the street and their radiant flood was, for the moment, dimmed.

"This way," Diane urged us, pulling at my arm and Von Karl's. "I live just here."

And so we retreated.

THE elephant has been used in war, but seldom if ever on ventures of espionage. However, Von Karl dared not liberate Gregor Marcolos, and so he compelled the ponderous and intimidated captive to lurch to his feet and follow after Diane, giving his personal imitation of a glacier in a hurry.

The street was now in great commotion, for the good burghers of Strassburg, though because of war conditions they showed no lights for fear of airplane attack, and were otherwise observant of the martial law, were not immune to curiosity. The shots and alarm roused everybody in the neighborhood. And in the midst of this peering forth and questioning and clamor, Diane led us the little way to her own door, opened it quickly, and hurried us in, out of sight.

"I am a young widow here," she explained. "Mme. Helfrich. My husband died in East Prussia, and I am in Strassburg to be near a brother who is wounded." To Von Karl she added: "When we got your message from Essen about the gas business, they sent me here from Switzerland, to be able to coöperate. I had just returned from Barcelona——"

"I have been to Barcelona," Marcolos said.

"Shut up!" the Spy Master snapped. "If your hearing is so acute, Friend Gregor, so much the worse for you."

Marcolos tried to protest that he was with us in this and would be summarily shot if discovered now, regardless of his secret affiliations in Berlin. And this, indeed, was the truth; but it gave us small release from being on our guard with him. Diane said her rooms were on the top floor. The police must presently undertake a house-to-house search for us. She guided us up the stairs with stealth, declaring she had a plan for our salvation.

THE plan took us over the roofs, to a similar house three doors away. Here, on the top floor also, there lived a resident spy, whom Diane roused in some mysterious manner. She called her only Henriette, but Von Karl seemed acquainted with the woman, too, and Gregor Marcolos also showed keen interest in her.

"I wonder," said Von Karl, "if I had not better shoot you, Gregor? You will learn too much, and cause our service the trouble of changing everything, to erase your inside information."

The leviathan quaked. Diane and Henriette said there would better be no further complications. I knew that the precious pieces of gas shell were considered worth any sacrifice; and Henriette cheerfully agreed that she would have to move, since Marcolos now knew of her home.

This brave Alsatian, daughter of a French officer who had served in the Franco-Prussian War, had waited years to serve France, Diane told me. She had a large false closet cunningly contrived, and here she kept carrier pigeons. We chipped off thin little slices of the lining of the shells—which the French chemists would need to effect an analysis—and made up tiny parcels for her two best birds to try to carry over. Unaccustomed to any weight save feather-like maps and messages, it was doubtful whether the gallant carriers could make the journey to Belfort. But since we all might be in prison before morning, it seemed best to try the experiment. On the morrow, said Diane, she would have the big shell pieces speeding to Paris headquarters via Switzerland, unless some mischance to-night——

I would not let her speak of it. Von Karl, Marcolos, and I were to hide in the false closet of Henriette, while Diane returned to her home, to be properly abed when the police cordon reached her door. She kissed me good-by, saying it was worth all our risk just to be together again, and then vanished lightly over the roofs once more.

STRASSBURG, encircled by forts, was a brilliant celestial obstacle by night for French or British air raiders. Overhead there was the unceasing flash of the searchlights, criss-cross as the great lamps raked the sky. But from the breadth and majesty of the roof we were transferred to the confines of the closet, where three resentful pigeons

shared with Von Karl and me what space Marcolos left, and doubtless joined us in favoring stricter weight and diet regulations for secret agents.

In half an hour we heard the police rouse Henriette. But an old resident of the city, and well known, she quickly passed their interrogation. Then we breathed more easily as they gave the roof a hasty visit and tramped back down the stairs.

Von Karl had kept his reloaded automatic pressed into the fat man's ample midriff; and that was all the nourishment the moaning Marcolos obtained until after seven o'clock in the morning, when Henriette brought us relief from our cell and a steaming hot breakfast.

There was, of course, no word as yet from Diane, who would be occupied all morning in dispatching the pieces of shell Von Karl had delivered to her. But at noon Henriette came back from her pretended marketing with terrible news.

Diane had sent off the shell fragments by a special secret courier at ten o'clock. They would be in a French laboratory by midnight. But returning home Diane—*my* Diane—had found her rooms under guard. Detectives had been ransacking the place, turning everything inside out. And when they had departed they had taken her with them. She was under arrest and charged with espionage.

V

THE horror and agony of the fortnight that followed Diane's arrest will live with me always, and no triumph hereafter, no pleasure or release from care, will ever wholly efface the scar of it from my mind.

Conrad von Karl—to whom the trial and execution of a spy was commonplace—seemed to suffer almost as much as I did. And with good cause! For on him fell all the responsibilities and all the brunt of our desperate situation in a hostile camp. Worry and the exposure I had suffered in traveling from Essen, brought me down with an attack of influenza. But I could not be taken to a hospital, and no doctor—no Alsatian or Lorrainer secretly loyal to France—would have dared attend me without reporting the case. So Von Karl, while moving heaven and earth to save Diane's life, was also my physician, and the fat Gregor Marcolos was my nurse.

DIANE'S rooms, denuded and closed by the police, had large Imperial seals on every door. But we entered by means of the roof, and it was Von Karl's bold stratagem to relieve Henriette and move over to live behind the arrogant barrier of the German seals. Marcolos was not to be trusted, and whenever the Spy Master set forth, he trussed him up and gagged him brutally. Part of this time I was feverish and a bit delirious; and we must have presented a weird spectacle, lying on mattresses obtained from Henriette—the huge Marcolos bound and helpless, and I in the irrational grip of my fever.

But to do the Levantine justice, there was in him, together with much treachery, that feminine streak usual to the Asiatic half-breed. So that he tended me with every care; he cooked secretively and washed—and even lost weight, said Von Karl, from his fright and solicitude.

My fever broke, and I commenced to mend the day Diane went on trial. Von Karl had his customary contacts with the underworld, and followed the proceedings minutely.

He even claimed to have attended one session of the court martial. He was in communication with Diane through a jail matron, and brought me one precious, triumphant little note from her—a bit of silk torn from an undergarment and stitched in long and short stitches, the dot and dash of the ordinary telegraph code. It said:

> I am well and not afraid. Do not worry. I love you. D.

But there came an afternoon when Von Karl, with uncommon recklessness, returned to us even before dusk, creeping over the roof-tops from Henriette's house, and endeavoring to joke with Marcolos while he unloosed him. And the fat man's response was panic-stricken, for he knew Von Karl and his subtle moods much better than I.

Diane had been convicted and sentenced to die. I detected it at once after seeing the Spy Master's face, the pallor of it and the livid coiling scar on his cheek, and that hatefully twitching eyebrow which even his granite composure could not subdue.

I refused to take medicine or nourishment until he had candidly told me all that he had learned. And then, when I knew the truth, I made Marcolos weep for my greedy consumption of broth and wine, for I vowed I would be strong in a day and somehow contrive to see Diane again, even if it meant only a last embrace and then our facing the volley together.

Conrad von Karl, in his better aspects a soldier of fortune, was true to that type now in fighting for a cause that seemed lost.

"I have sent to Frankfort for money," he said. "Gold. I never bribe with currency. It's the glitter that gets 'em. And I have set two neutral governments to work trying to win her a reprieve. If this city weren't swarming with troops and counter-spies, our job would be comparatively simple. However, we have a little time. Keep your head."

And I tried not to hamper him with excited and fanciful suggestions of rescue. Diane was to be shot at midnight on March 5. She was said to have behaved admirably, both during her trial and since the death sentence had been passed upon her. A magnificent patriot, many were whispering in Strassburg—unaware that Diane, like themselves, was loyal to France without being a citizen of the Republic.

THE case made out against her, Von Karl admitted, was a strong one. By an unlucky accident she had been spotted before she left Switzerland. Then a waitress had denounced her, saying she was not a German and did not look like one despite the dowdy outer garments. And here—as even the best of professionals will do—Diane had blundered like an amateur. For her love of fine things was constitutional, and though outwardly the poor widow of a nation in which luxuries had risen to a prohibitive figure, her lingeries and toilet accessories remained strictly Parisian. Suspecting her, the police had quietly visited her rooms while she was out. And thereafter her disguise had been like glass. She had been let to continue undisturbed and build a case against herself. The police agent in the restaurant that night had really been shadowing her, but he had rushed out to attempt to round-up larger game when he heard Marcolos speak to Von Karl and me in French.

During March 3d and 4th, Von Karl kept assuring me that his plan was progressing with unexampled smoothness.

"She is as good as free right this minute," he swore.

And something of his confidence communicated to me, so that I felt stronger and more eager than ever to aid him, and both of us grew careless about Gregor Marcolos.

VON KARL took me with him when he went forth on the night of the 4th. We left the protesting fat man bound and silenced, as we thought. But when we returned before dawn, by the usual route over the roofs, Marcolos and every edible and drinkable substance in the rooms had vanished away. Not daring the roofs himself, he had burst asunder the imperial seals and gone down the stairs. So that Von Karl and I, if desperately weary, could do nothing but gather up what little he had left us and flee incontinently, stopping only to warn the gallant and resolute Henriette.

Marcolos had become an intolerable burden. I was not sure Von Karl hadn't liberated him under some awful threat or curious form of parole, desiring to be rid of a useless captive. However, he seemed not to pretend his concern for our safety. He complained of our having to wait until dusk to begin the final maneuver of rescue. And he picked the Orangerie, that beautiful public park, for us to wait in.

He had obtained new uniforms for us both. The park by day would be thronged anew with convalescent wounded; and he bandaged my head and bestowed me among some bushes, so that, if discovered and reported, I could feign having become lost and having collapsed from exposure overnight. And then he went away to find the motor vehicle we would need that evening if Diane came free from her doom.

Von Karl obtained an ambulance and had Red Cross brassards for himself. I suspected he had used force to get the latter, stealth and bribery to secure the former. My rôle was to be simply that of a wounded occupant of the ambulance, rendering our expedition as ordinary a sight as Strassburg afforded. At quarter past six we rolled up and came to a stop within view of the walls behind which Diane suffered imprisonment. At six-thirty we drew nearer. It was our hope that the bribed jailer would spirit her into the jail yard at seven, whence we must take charge and convey her over the high wall and away.

I lay on a stretcher inside the ambulance, every nerve and muscle aching from the tension of our impending coup. Suddenly I heard unmistakable and alarming sounds. There were men marching in the jail yard. An officer gave a sharp command, and another. Von Karl and I strained to hear.

What we heard was an indistinct series of orders, and then, distinct and terrible: "Fire!"

A roll of musketry—a muffled volley as riflemen fired in unison—was vibrating beyond those grim gray walls. And in the yard of the jail, we knew, an execution had taken place. Diane? Could it be Diane? But who else?

Diane dead! And we waiting here——

"Marcolos! The filthy renegade!" Von Karl exclaimed. "He warned them we meant to rescue her. They advanced the time of execution——"

Advanced the time of execution! Then it had been Diane they had severed from life with their volley!

INSIDE my throbbing head another volley exploded with painful realism. I seemed literally blown from the German ambulance. I rushed frantically upon that wall

which had shut me off from the ghastly scene. I cried out and began to rave and beat upon the stones with my fists till they grew red.

Von Karl had leaped after me and was trying to restrain me from this ultimate disaster. A crowd gathered, many being in uniform.

"A bad case! Help me, will you?" I heard Von Karl call out. And I remember noticing in all my anguish how perfectly he imitated a Prussian hospital orderly. "Shell shock? Yes. I'm taking him to an asylum. That's it—take hold of his legs——"

But I became infuriated with so much pretense. Diane had pretended, too, and now she was dead. I wanted to die. I shrieked and clawed at many faces. And then Von Karl, sick and scowling, struck me a terrific blow on the point of the chin.

IT SEEMED hours before I awakened. As a matter of fact, it was many days, for Von Karl, I was later to learn, kept me under the influence of opiates until we reached our destination.

But when I did awake, I found my surroundings pleasant, and the horror and tragedy of my late experience did not at once crowd upon my consciousness. I lay in a clean, white hospital bed, in a very white and clean room which had not much in it, and which presented through its one great window only a limited view of clear blue sky.

I sat up. I did not feel weak, so I presently attempted to rise. And then I heard my name called, and it was in Diane's voice. Was I mad, after all? Had the window shutters or bars? And then a nurse came and stood beside me, and, like the voice, she too resembled Diane. I was mad, then! Delirious only, or permanently crazed?

But the nurse was Diane—*my* Diane, in a nurse's blue and white uniform. I was sure of her when she bent and kissed me, for nurses, even in one's delirium, seldom do that. I had been delirious with Marcolos for nurse not so long ago.

"My dearest!" she whispered.

"You—you were saved, after all?"

"Yes." She tried to pass over it lightly. "By agreeing to become a double—a double spy," she said. "But that we must save to talk about later."

"But where are we, dear one?" I questioned.

"About thirty kilometres from Munich," she said, "near Hohenlinden. Von Karl is here, too. He will want to see you at once——"

"Is it his house?"

"Well, in a way, yes, dear. It is a kind of sanitarium, but it is also a spy school."

"A *German* spy school?"

"Yes, of course. But now, my dearest, don't worry. Just remember that we are safe, all of us—safe, do you understand?—and with Von Karl in charge of everything."

Well, I tried not to worry. I tried to understand. And it did appear that somehow we were achieving a kind of security in this curious retreat, though at what price and what future risk neither Diane nor I, nor the Spy Master himself, could foresee at this placid moment.

Delia pushed him out with a frightened gasp.

Rummy

By CARL CLAUSEN

Battling Bilbo—he is known to his intimate friends as Bat, but we're hardly intimate enough for that—broke into society in a peculiar way—by grabbing a young lady's ankle. When he broke out again, he came pretty close to grabbing her heart. Of course it couldn't have been—such things just aren't done in good society—but it did give the fair Delia a thrill and it gave Mr. Bilbo a whole flock of them.

I

MR. BILBO'S presence aboard Sylvester J. Saal's palatial yacht, the *Challenger*, was due to invitation; not of the conventional kind, issued on embossed and watermarked stationery, with which Sylvester J. summoned his satellites of finance and their wives and offspring to his fleshpots, but of a more peremptory and insistent urge.

Mr. Bilbo, otherwise known as Battling Bilbo, and among his intimate friends as plain Bat, was a burglar, and in the steward's room of the *Challenger* there was a manganese steel wall safe, the existence of which had been broadcast by the reporter of the *Morning Courier*, along with other interesting data anent Sylvester J.'s seagoing hack.

Mr. Bilbo, whose profession it was to open such things without the formality of securing the combination, needed no second invitation, so he

"borrowed" a rowboat from the Santa Monica Yacht Club's slip and blithely skiffed across the not particularly bounding main of Santa Monica bay, with a kit of burglar tools under the stern sheets.

The *Challenger*, a four-hundred-ton mahogany yacht, was anchored a quarter of a mile off the Palisades, on the bluffs of which Mr. Saal's recently completed beach "cottage" of sixty-seven rooms and eighteen baths nestled in a grove of palm trees, imported from the wild jungles of Land & Scapes, horticultural establishment.

A function of the variety known as a moonlight bathing sonata, in honor of the engagement of Sylvester J.'s youngest daughter, was in progress. The young lady, whose name was Delia, was about to give her lily-white hand to the only son of a thirty-thousand-barrel spouter, and to live happily ever after the judge, with the customary gallantry, had awarded her twenty-nine out of the possible thirty as alimony.

BAT rowed cautiously around the bow of the yacht, tied the skiff to the anchor chain, and swung himself aboard. The crew had gone ashore to spend the evening in the conventional manner in which sailormen have spent such things since the day old John Stonehatchet, battling with a dinosaurus in a wild-grape thicket, stepped on a bushel of grapes in the hot sun, the liquid result of which he mistook a day or so later for a bucket of the dino's blood, and promptly proceeded to sop it up in the hope that some of the saurian's valiance might be transferred to him. It is said that John tore up a quarter section of carboniferous jungle, and twisted the tails of a flock of peaceful pterodactyls, before he was crowned into submission by Mrs. Stonehatchet with the gas bill, which the collector had just receipted with his hammer and chisel.

Bat had assured himself of said social activities of the crew. Also, of the fact that the night watchman, true to form, had a standing appointment with Morpheus at nine-thirty, which he never failed to keep. Mr. Bilbo had also assured himself of the presence of a certain amount of cash in the safe, as the aforesaid moonlight bathing party was scheduled to leave the following morning for a protracted cruise among the channel islands. Being an optimistic person, he considered it likely that the female members of the party had taken along a few negotiable doo-dads.

Making his way on tiptoe along the deck to the companionway hatch, he stepped below. The compartment in which he found himself was a passage with life-preservers decorating the walls and with doors leading port and starboard. Flashing his electric torch about, he noted that one of these doors was marked "Master" and the other was labeled "Salon." He decided with a sad, reminiscent smile that the latter held the more promising possibilities, so he opened it and peered within. The light of the torch—Mr. Bilbo had pasted a piece of adhesive tape over it, leaving a tiny hole the size of a match-head, through which a thin beam of light stabbed the darkness like a stiletto—proved the room to be large, well-furnished, and replete with evidence that Sylvester J. needed no seven-league boots to keep ahead of the wolf.

After having assured himself that there was nothing of negotiable value there, Bat tried a door in the far end of the room, and saw that

it led into a long, narrow hall. Feeling his way along this, he found another door, marked "Steward." It was locked, so he sprang the lock gently with his jimmy without leaving a mark, and entered. Almost the first thing he saw was the safe. With the anticipatory smile of a shark eying a mariner marooned on the last four feet of a submerged mast at low tide, he set down his kit of burglar tools, lit a cigaret, pulled on a pair of thin silk gloves, and prepared leisurely to give Sylvester J. another item to credit his income tax with for nineteen twenty-eight. Mr. Bilbo always wore gloves on such nocturnal visits. It gave a ritualistic air to the proceedings; also something for the finger-print experts to worry about.

Next he took from the lining of his coat a long darning needle which he clinched tightly between his teeth by the eye. Leaning forward until the point of the needle touched the manganese steel safe door, he held it there firmly. With the gloved fingers of his right hand, he began turning the knob, listening intently for the tumblers to fall, the darning needle between his teeth acting as a phonograph needle, and the roof of his mouth as a sounding board, ready to communicate to his alert brain the falling of the tumblers, which it did in the short space of two minutes, twenty-eight seconds, by the silver-mounted chronometer inset in the mahogany over his head.

Swinging his weight against the handle, he turned it, pulled the safe door open, and peered within.

Except for a tin cash-box containing four one-cent stamps and a recipe for making Spanish ragout, it was empty.

Bat relieved his feelings in a whiskey bass. Savagely closing the safe door, he pasted the four stamps on the face of it, by way of revenge, and left the compartment, gnashing his teeth.

WHEN he regained the deck he stood for a moment listening, then made his way forward. He was about to swing himself over the bow to the waiting skiff tied up to the anchor chain, when he noted with consternation that the little boat was neither tied up nor waiting. The unseamanlike knot that he had made with the rope painter about the anchor chain had come undone. In the bright moonlight, some six hundred yards in the general direction of Yokohama, he could just distinguish the dark outline of his untrusty bark.

Mr. Bilbo sat down on a windlass and for the second time that evening delivered himself of a string of curses that made up in intensity for what they lacked in audibleness.

"Sufferin', sweet-scented petunia!" he groaned, "and me whut can't swim a stroke."

Remembering the life-preservers in the passage to the salon, he retraced his steps thither. His nautical experience having been limited to the Key Route ferry-boats on San Francisco bay, he was not sure how life-preservers were used. In a vague sort of way he knew that one tied them about one's body. Rummaging in the locker under the stairway, he found there a couple of bathing suits and an old oilskin coat. He divested himself of his clothes and slipped into one of the suits, a flamboyant creation of green silk with a yellow Y emblazoned on the chest. His garments and his kit of tools he made into a sort of waterproof raft by rolling them up in the oilskin coat and tying a life-preserver about them. Then he got down four more life-preservers. Two of them

he tied around his waist, front and back, the others he fastened about each thigh. He was not taking any chances.

Somewhat impeded by his armor of cork, he sneaked on deck, dropped the improvised raft over the side, and followed it across the rail with some misgivings, and a pair of barked shins. For one chilling moment he hung suspended, with his bare feet touching the ice-cold surface of the sea. Then he set his teeth, shut his eyes, and let go.

The result was unexpected. He bobbed up for a moment, then was stood unceremoniously on his head, the buoyancy of the nether part of his body being out of all proportion to the upper part. He was all but drowned before he succeeded in freeing himself from the two life-preservers tied about his legs and raising his head above the water for a breath of the much-advertised Southern California ozone. Gasping, he filled his lungs with it, then hooked one finger into the strap of the raft bearing his precious tools, and kicked off, pushing said raft before him.

Leander's famous sprint across the Hellespont in full armor was no more heroic than was the negotiating of that quarter-mile of placid ocean to a man of Bat's limited aquatic experience. He was all but worn out when the first line breaker raised him skyward and he heard, with some misgivings, the voices of the members of Delia's moonlight bathing party. Going 'bout ship hastily, he headed for a rocky point to leeward to avoid them, when the next breaker caught him on its crest, knocked the breath out of him, spun him heels up, and slid him shoreward with his somewhat cauliflowered ear to the hard sand bottom.

In due time he came to the surface again, sputtering for air, and looked wildly about for his raft, which had been torn from his grasp. Seeing something dark bobbing about the agitated water nearby, he made a grab for it, missed it, but got a strangle-hold on something else—the left and very comely leg of Miss Delia Saal, who had ventured beyond her depth, and whose cries for help had gone unnoticed in the general hilariousness of the sonata.

Bat did not know what he had grabbed. He only knew, as a giant comber struck him, that it was something to hang on to in that maddening chaos of turbulent water, so he dug his finger-nails into Miss Delia's trim ankle and hung on. The crushing weight of water bore him down. He was carried hither and yon by opposing currents, was stood on his head once more, then was rushed shoreward with incredible speed, this time the neatly shaven back of his neck scraping over the hard sand, and his feet pointing to the sky. The next moment he was flung on the beach, semi-conscious, but still grasping the aristocratic ankle of Delia Saal. Then a black curtain dropped, and, for Bat, athletics ceased to be an object of any interest.

II

WHEN he came to his senses again it was daylight. His head was swathed in bandages. He raised his hand and touched it gingerly. It felt as if some one had caressed it with an emery wheel. Glancing about, he noted that he was lying on a bed in a room which his practised eye classified at once as a "swell flop." On a stand near the bed stood a contraption that looked like a cross between an

acetylene torch outfit and a radio. Never having seen a pulmotor before, Bat regarded it with suspicion. Something told him that the thing was responsible for his present predicament.

He was still eying it darkly when a door opened and a young woman in the garb of a nurse entered. Bat closed his eyes hastily, then opened the fluttering lids cautiously, a fraction of an inch, and squinted at her. She was of the variety known to the profession as a "blonde skoit." He noted that her "lamps" were blue, and that she possessed two rows of teeth that reminded him of a display he had once seen in a dentist's showcase in Kearney Street, San Francisco.

"Hello, hero," she said.

Bat opened his eyes wide.

"Hello yerself," he replied noncommittally.

The nurse smiled.

"I suppose you'd like to know that the young lady is doing nicely?"

"Sure," said Bat. "What lady?"

"You funny, modest man!" the nurse gurgled.

"Yeah," Bat snorted. "Ain't I funny!"

The nurse puckered her brow.

"Miss Delia sends her compliments," she said soothingly. "She has recovered entirely and will be up in a little while to thank you for saving her life."

Bat blinked. His brain functioned with lightning rapidity. It seemed that he had saved some one by the name of Delia — how, when, and why he hadn't the faintest idea. This Delia, judging by the general atmosphere, the nurse, the swell flop, must have jack; then, again, she might only be working there, he reflected. He put his next question guardedly.

"Dis Delia party—is she de cook of dis joint?" he asked.

The nurse laughed.

"The chief cook and bottle-washer," she replied with conviction.

"H'm," said Bat thoughtfully.

There were steps in the hall.

"Here she is now," the nurse said. She opened the door and left the room.

A girl walked in, followed by a middle-aged man. Bat gave the pair the once-over through half-closed lids. The young lady was pale, but very easy to look at. She smiled brightly as she advanced. Then she stopped, apparently searching her mind for a clue to tell her to which of her eighty-odd guests of the evening before Bat's face belonged. Sylvester J., fat, oleaginous, and slightly splay-footed, stood a little apart and regarded Bat as if he were an entomological specimen presented to him for classification. Mr. Saal's mental observation was that Delia's taste in male companions was even more reprehensible than he had thought. Nevertheless, he reflected, this villainous-looking individual had saved his daughter from a cold, damp grave, so it was up to him to do the grateful parent act.

"If there is anything you want, sir," he began ponderously—"anything within reason," he amended cautiously—"name it, and it shall be yours."

Bat regarded them speculatively. They both looked like ready money, he decided. He cleared his throat.

"Would twenty-five bucks be too much?" he asked.

Miss Delia and Mr. Saal exchanged glances.

"The poor fellow's mind is wandering," she said in a low tone. "You poor, poor man!" she whis-

pered, dropping to her knees beside the bed and stroking Bat's head. "You risked your own life to save my worthless one."

Bat's teeth came together with a snap. This was his unlucky day, it seemed.

"All right," he muttered philosophically, "make it fifteen, den."

The girl rose with a worried look, and both left the room. Presently the nurse returned. In her hand she carried the green bathing suit with the yellow Y, which she hung over the back of a chair. Recognizing it, Bat groaned, as the happenings of the night before tore through his harassed brain. He was in bed in a strange house, with his clothes gone, and on the chair hung the evidence that would convict him of attempted burglary.

He watched the nurse through narrowed lids while his nimble mind cast about wildly for a plan of escape. He was considering the advisability of summarily rising and choking her to insensibility, and then rummaging through the house on the chance of finding a suit of clothes, when Miss Delia returned, accompanied by a middle-aged man whom Bat classified at once as a "pill-mixer."

"Well, well, my nautical friend," said the doctor in the jovial tone in which an M.D. speeds his victim on his last journey. "Feeling a bit logy, eh? Haven't gotten your bearings yet, as it were? No wonder, my boy, no wonder. We pumped three and a half quarts of sea water out of you."

Bat regarded the speaker with a mixture of fear and suspicion. The reference to his stomach reminded him that he was famished.

"When do we eat?" he asked.

"Aha!" the M.D. gurgled. "We're taking an interest in life once more! Hungry! A good sympton, a very—ahem—excellent symptom." He belonged to the school of medicine that believes in choking patients to death with food so its adherents cannot be accused of murdering them in the regular way. "Now, what would you like for breakfast?"

"A yard of sirloin on the hoof," said Bat promptly.

The physician and Miss Delia came to with a start.

"He means a large steak, cooked rare, I think," the M.D. translated. Again Miss Delia searched her mind as to the identity of her bloodthirsty guest and rescuer.

"You shall have it," she told Bat.

"Thanks, lady," he replied. "And would you mind telling de cook to draw me one in de dark, and throw a bushel of German fried in de pan?"

"I think he means black coffee and fried potatoes," the doctor ventured.

"Soitinly," said Bat. "Don't yer understand English?"

"I'll have it sent up at once," Delia replied, with a deep intake of breath.

IN THE library downstairs there was a conference some ten minutes later while the cook broiled the "yard of sirloin." The conference was between Sylvester J., Miss Delia, the doctor and the only son of the spouter. Miss Delia vehemently denied that Bat was a member of her party. The only son of the spouter, whose name was Christopher Hicks, scowled incredulously. He was a bright youth, wise in the ways of women, having been sued twice for breach of promise and once for alienation of affection. He was also jealous of the fair Delia. He wondered if the bloodthirsty one upstairs were not a secret lover of

his betrothed, covering up his identity by assuming the idiosyncrasies and vocabulary of the underworld. The same idea had occurred to Sylvester J. as he sat chewing the end of his dead perfecto. Early in life his daughter had shown plebeian tastes by falling in love with the Saal chauffeur. The only thing that had prevented her announcing her engagement to the man was the discovery that he already was somewhat married to a lady in Skowhegan, Wisconsin.

Realizing from the look in her father's eyes what he was thinking, Delia burst out:

"I don't care if he has temporary as-asphyxia—you're not going to railroad him to the psychopathic ward. He saved me from drowning, and he's going to stay here until he gets well, and that's that."

It was—as Sylvester J. well knew from past experience. Christopher grumbled something about the unreasonableness of the female mind, and the doctor hinted darkly of people found murdered in their beds after harboring dangerous lunatics; but Delia was firm.

EARLY in the afternoon she went upstairs and found Bat sitting up in bed, smoking a cigaret and playing solitaire on the white counterpane.

"'Lo, kid," he said briefly, without removing the cigaret from his lips. On the stand nearby lay the rest of the package which the sympathetic nurse had commandeered from the library. Delia smiled. Bat's easy familiarity amused her. She was dying to know who he was and how he had come to be mixed up with her bathing party; and it is safe to say that Bat would have died rather than tell her. She also wondered how Bat had come by her absent brother's green bathing suit, hanging over the back of the chair with the yellow emblem staring back at her. It was with this in mind that she said to Bat:

"You've been to college, I see."

Bat almost swallowed the butt of his cigaret, when it was flashed to his brain that she had not meant what he had in mind.

"Sure thing," he agreed, coughing, stalling for time.

"What year are you?"

Bat drew a long breath. He wondered if she referred to the year of his birth, a date shrouded in considerable mystery, or his latest graduation from San Quentin prison. The question seemed innocent.

"Eighteen ninety-two," he answered carelessly, reasonably sure that he had hit within a decade or so. "How old are *you?*"

Delia smiled enigmatically.

"Twenty-two," she replied.

"Nice age," he commented, shuffling the cards. "Ever play rummy?"

"No," she confessed.

"Wanter learn?"

"I'd love to."

"Right y'are," said Bat. "Throw dat green dinkus off dat chair an' sit down."

Delia removed the "green dinkus." She pointed to the yellow initial Y.

"What does that stand for?" she asked innocently.

"What? Dat—oh, dat's a hayfork, kid. I belong to de Hay Tossers' Union. Dat's me problem."

"I see," said Delia gravely. She shuddered when she thought of the fun she would have missed if she had been drowned the night before. "I suppose you're an officer?"

Bat started slightly at the mention of the word.

"Oh, yer mean a officer in de

union. You tell 'em, kid. I'm de Grand Beagle."

"I was sure you would be," Delia murmured.

"You bet. If yer ever come up to 'Frisco, I'll take yer to one of deir hops."

"That would be grand," Delia agreed.

Bat beamed at her as he dealt the cards.

"Yer a nice little kid," he declared. "You an' me'd get along swell," he added, reaching for her hand in a sudden burst of emotion.

Delia withdrew her fingers.

"How do I know that you're not married?" she said primly.

"Who—me? Do I *look* dat crazy? Lissun, kid, I never marries 'em."

"Oh, I see."

He stole a look at her downcast eyes.

"O' course I ain't sayin' dat I mightn't change me mind if de dame wus a good looker like you," he qualified guardedly, at which remark Delia found herself actually blushing.

"Fergit what I said about the fifteen bucks fer saving yer," he said magnanimously, after he had explained some of the rules of rummy. "I wus only kiddin' yer ol' man. O' course, if he could spare a five-spot, it'd come in handy."

"I don't think he'd miss five dollars," said Delia with conviction. "I'll see that you get it."

"Dat's mighty white o' yer, kid. Now, if yer got three of a kind or a run of threes, yer lay 'em down—see? Dat's right! Three queens. De idea is to git shet o' yer cards before I git shet o' mine." He paused. "Yer couldn't crib an ol' suit fur me from somewheres, kid, could yer? I left me duds down at de bath-house when I goes for me evenin' swim last night."

"I think perhaps I could," Delia said. "But why not let me send a messenger down to the bath-house for yours?"

Bat shook his head vigorously.

"Dey wouldn't give 'em ter yer. I'd hafter go dere meself."

"Oh, I'm quite sure they would, under the circumstances," she declared.

"Dey wouldn't!" Bat insisted doggedly. "Dat bath-house gang is a hard-boiled bunch. I know."

"Very well, I'll get you a suit."

"Yer might throw in an ol' shirt an' a pair o' kicks," Bat suggested.

"I will," said Delia.

IT WAS four o'clock before the game broke up. Delia had not spent a more exciting afternoon since the day she raced two county motor-cops from Calabasas to the city limits of Los Angeles, and beat them by a thimbleful of gasoline.

"Yer won't fergit about dem duds, will yer?" Bat asked anxiously. "I want ter travel around midnight."

"I won't. But hadn't you better stay until to-morrow?"

"Not me," said Bat, with conviction.

"I shall be sorry to see you go," Delia said, and she meant it. She had had considerable experience with men, but this one was a new specimen. She wondered how it would feel to have a hard, ruthless man, who didn't marry 'em, crush her in his arms just once. The thought gave her a chill.

"I'll be sorry, too," said Bat. "But I'll give yer me phone number, so yer can give me a buzz when yer gits lonesome fur a game o' rummy."

"That'll be nice," Delia replied as she thought of the consternation such a procedure would cause in her immediate family. "I'll bring up

the suit this evening, when the coast is clear."

"Fine!" Bat threw her a kiss. "So long, kid."

She paused with her hand on the door knob. Then impulsively she raised her fingers to her lips, returned the salutation, and was gone.

III

SHORTLY after dinner that evening the gardener came into the library to see Sylvester J. In his hand the man carried a small leather satchel and a water-soaked suit of clothes.

"I found these things with one of the *Challenger's* life-preservers tied around them, washed ashore at the foot of the garden, near the boat-slip, sir," the man said, opening the satchel for Mr. Saal's inspection. "If I'm not mistaken, these are burglar tools."

Delia, in the music-room, listened with beating heart. She heard her father give a grunt of surprise, then say to the gardener:

"Get the Los Angeles police station on the phone, Hawkins, and tell them to send out a couple of men at once, before the fellow has a chance to get away."

"Yes, sir."

When the gardener had gone on his errand Delia tiptoed from the room and up the stairs. They were going to give up to the police the man who had saved her life. Not if she could prevent it! Dashing to her absent brother's room, she raided his wardrobe of one of his best suits, a silk shirt, collar and tie, a pair of shoes, socks, a hat, and the necessary underwear. With these she fled down the hall to Bat's room and dumped them on the bed.

"Get into them as fast as you can," she whispered breathlessly. "Then sneak down the back stairs. I'll be waiting for you with my roadster behind the garage. Work fast. They've found your bag of —er—implements. The gardener is calling the Los Angeles police station now."

Half an hour later, when they were speeding cityward, with Bat lacing Brother Frank's collegiate number nine shoes about his own small, shapely number seven feet, and otherwise putting the finishing touches to his rather hurried toilet, they met the police machine tearing beachward at sixty miles an hour, with siren screeching and the muffler wide open.

"Cheese it!" said Bat. "Dat wus a close shave."

He glanced at the girl. She sat crouched forward over the wheel, staring straight ahead. Down one cheek rolled a tear. She was frozen rigid at her own temerity. Bat put his hand on her shoulder.

"Don't bawl, kid. Dere ain't nothin' to be scairt of. Dey won't get us now."

"You b-bet they won't!" she replied. She glanced back as she saw the headlights of a fast interurban trolley coming up behind them. "I'm going to let you out here." She brought the car to a skidding stop. "Catch that train. The officers will be turning back when they find you gone from the house. Their fast machine will overtake us."

Bat opened the foredoor. He glanced over his shoulder at the approaching train, then at the girl. With a sudden decision he leaned over and kissed her.

"Yer a good kid," he said simply and with astonishing sincerity.

Delia pushed him out of the roadster with a frightened gasp.

"Quick! Flag the train or you'll miss it!" she cried. "They don't stop here unless you signal them.

You'll find money in your right-hand trouser pocket. Good-by and good luck!"

She waited until the train slowed up for him. As he swung himself aboard he called out over his shoulder:

"S'long, kid! Call Main 62894 fur a game of rummy."

As the train moved away she saw him run his hand into his pocket for his fare, saw the look of surprise on his face at the roll of bills which he found there, and got one fleeting glance of him waving his hand to her. She followed the train with her eyes until it was out of sight. Then she shook herself and drew a deep breath.

"Delia Saal," she said severely, "get off your foot—you're standing on it!"

Slipping the clutch in, she drove slowly homeward.

The Oriental Gold-Maker

By A. H. FRENCH

THE idea of the Philosopher's Stone, that mysterious and never-discovered mineral by which baser metals might be turned into gold, originated in the Orient, and the search for it persisted there until a very recent date.

Kinneir, an English traveler who visited Turkey and Arabia in 1813 and 1814, brought back a remarkable story of an Arabian alchemist who would appear to have solved the riddle. The scene was Basra, near the Persian Gulf, a city one thousand three hundred years old and once a center of Arabic culture, where alchemists had probably experimented for centuries.

Mr. Colquhoun, English consul at Basra, told Kinneir that he had received a message from an Arabian philosopher who begged for protection from the persecution of his countrymen. Having been informed that he had the power of transmuting cheap metals into gold, they daily put him to the torture to wring his secret from him. He said that he would divulge everything he knew to Mr. Colquhoun, provided he were permitted to reside in the consulate.

This being granted, he brought a small crucible and a dish of coals; and when the former had become hot, he took four small papers containing whitish powders from his pocket and asked Colquhoun for a piece of lead. The latter went into his study, and, taking four pistol bullets, weighed them, unknown to the alchemist; these, with the powder, he put into the crucible, and the whole was immediately in a state of fusion.

After the lapse of about twenty minutes, the Arab told Colquhoun to take the vessel from the fire and put it into the open air to cool; the contents were then removed, and the residuum proved to be a piece of pure gold, of the same weight as the bullets. The gold was afterward valued at ninety piastres.

"It is not easy," says Kinneir, "to imagine how such a deception could have been accomplished, since the crucible remained untouched by the Arab after it had been put on the fire; while it is at the same time difficult to conceive why a poor Arab should have chosen to make an English gentleman a present of ninety piastres. Colquhoun ordered him to return next day, which he promised to do; but in the middle of the night the Sheik of Grane, with a body of armed men, broke into the house and carried him off."

Savage Magic

By WILFRED HORNER

THE fact that the magic practised by European witches and magicians even as late as two or three centuries ago was a survival of the savage days of the white race is proved by the fact that magic still practised by savage races in various parts of the world to-day has many precisely similar rites and incantations. It used to be believed that witches could do an enemy bodily harm by torturing a small clay or waxen image supposed to represent him. This is still a custom among savage races who never heard of European witchcraft. For example, the Siamese wizard makes an image a footstep long of his victim; when the eyes of the image are pressed the victim becomes blind; when the waist is pierced he becomes ill in his digestive organs. If you wish to slay him, pierce the image's head with a palm twig, then wrap it in a shroud, praying over it as if over a corpse, and bury it in a path leading to the victim's house, so that he may step over it. Sometimes the wizard repeats a formula indicating that not he but an angel is burying the body; sometimes he says: "It is not wax that I slay, but the heart, liver, and spleen of So-and-so."

In "contagious" magic, you must get hold of something from a person's body in order to bewitch him. One of the old methods is to get a lock of his hair.

The Cherokee Indian magicians have a formula which reminds one of old European practice. The wizard follows his victim until he spits on the ground. Quickly collecting the spittle, mixed with dust, on the end of a stick, the medicine man puts it into a tube made of a poisonous plant, together with some splinters from a tree shattered by lightning and seven earthworms pounded to a paste, and buries the whole with seven yellow stones (the emblem of trouble) at the foot of a tree struck by lightning, which is very powerful in magic. A fire is built over the spot, and the wizard fasts until the ceremony is over. The worms are supposed to eat the victim's soul.

If the charm fails to injure him within seven days, the magician and the man who employed him consider themselves to be in imminent danger, for a frustrated charm is apt to recoil on the plotter's own head.

He cursed her to a fare-thee-well and raved that she was lying.

The Inside Story

By LESLIE McFARLANE

Sheik Lemoyne was a "slick guy," but he forgot one important thing—that when a man surrounds himself with women, one of them is sure to break loose sooner or later. And it was this seemingly negligible oversight that wrought the Sheik's undoing.

WELL, it's all over. He's gone. Yeah, he swung this morning.

I've been in the newspaper game for quite a while now, but this is the first time I ever covered a hanging. And believe me, it's the last. Couldn't eat my breakfast. Funny, huh?—a hard-boiled guy like me getting shaky over a thing like that; but I tell you it's no Sunday School picnic to see a fellow you've known die squirming and wriggling at the end of a rope.

Sure I knew him. That's why they put me on the story from the human interest angle. The waterfront is my beat, but they took me off it when Sheik Lemoyne broke into the big news.

Yeah, I knew the Sheik. Him and his wife. Knew when they were first married. And this morning I saw him step out onto the trap, and I heard him tell the priest to go to hell when the prayer started, and I saw him drop, and I wached him twitching there with the black hood over

his head and the rope spinning—I saw his finish.

His wife? She'll be all broken up now that he's gone? That's what *you* think, maybe. That's what everybody thinks. But I know different. I know the inside story, see?—and it's a story that hasn't been in the papers yet and won't be either if I have anything to do about it. Sure she stuck by him. Stuck by him for five years and him getting into every kind of deviltry you can imagine, beating her up, deserting her every once in a while for some other dame—she stuck by him all right. The papers have had plenty about it. A regular crook's moll. He sure led her an awful life, considering what a nice kid she was before she married him. But she stood for it.

Women are funny that way? Treat 'em rough and they love you all the more for it? Maybe! People think she was like that, but I know the inside story, see? The inside story. She wasn't as nuts about Sheik Lemoyne as he thought she was. Listen:

I WAS working on a paper in a little city up in Ontario when I first met Lemoyne. He was a bad egg even then, though he was only about nineteen. Good-looking boy and smart, but there was a bad streak in him. Nobody ever knew him to work, but he always had good clothes, always had lots of money to spend. Down at the station house the dicks used to tell me he hurled a mean pair of dice, and they always figured he was doing some smooth bootlegging around the hotels, but they could never hang anything on him.

He always had a raft of flappers chasing after him, because he was a good-looking boy with a hot line, and more than once there was a bit of whispering about what their brothers were going to do to him, but the Sheik was too slick. He could

bull his way out of any jam like that. He was no dumb Apollo, what I mean. The kid was smart.

Irene was the only girl he ever fell for, and when he fell he fell hard. A nice girl. She worked in a factory and hadn't any people. I guess I had a sort of a case on the kid myself, for she was pretty and neat and straight as a string. Met her at a dance one night and took her to the movies a few times before the Sheik got his eye on her, and then nobody counted but him.

I tried to tip her off, but she wouldn't listen.

"What do you know about him?" she asked. "What's wrong with him? Has he ever been in jail? Has he ever been in any trouble?"

I had to admit she was right. Nobody had anything on Sheik Lemoyne, but——

"But what?"

"Well, he doesn't work. How does he make his money?"

"He's going to work," she snapped. "He's got a good job driving a taxi, and he promised me he'd start working regular as soon as we get married."

"Married?" I gasped.

"Yes, married. He's going to marry me, and I don't see that it's anybody's business but his and mine. You can't say one single thing against him except gossip."

Well, that was true enough, although the gossip was plenty. Every one knew Sheik Lemoyne was a worthless young scamp, but when a girl gets it into her head that she's going to marry a guy to reform him, you may as well pick out your wedding present. That's what she did, and that's what I did.

He went to work all right. He drove a taxi. He could make an automobile stand up on its hind legs and eat out of his hand. The trouble was, he was driving a taxi just as a blind. Everybody knew he was running booze for Stepanelli—that is, everybody but Irene, and she must have got wise later on.

So there was Sheik Lemoyne, married to this sweet kid, scooting around in a big car every night and driving the cops nearly crazy trying to throw the hooks into him, but somehow they never could. He was always just about three jumps ahead of them. He was no dumb driver. He figured things out, that boy. Smart, see?

EVERYTHING was going his way, and he began to extend himself a bit. He was Stepanelli's right-hand man and making plenty of dough. There was an Englishman named Haines in with the Italian, but they had a row over the profits, so Haines started up in a business of his own, and a gang war opened up. It didn't last long.

Somebody took a shot at Haines right at the door of his own house one night and put a bullet through his shoulder. He told the cops he didn't know who did it, but—sure it was Lemoyne. Plugged him and told him if he didn't lay off the booze racket and if he squealed he'd be bumped off. Haines told me himself. He quit bootleggin' and went into the garage business, which is legal, at any rate.

Then an Italian from one of the other cities blew into town and tried his hand at bucking Stepanelli. He was a tough guy, and he brought a couple of tough birds with him, and the war was on. It ended up with one of the outsiders being found in the river and the Italian's getting a bullet in the knee that put him in the hospital for a while. These people never talk when they get theirs, but I stood in pretty strong with Step-

anelli's crowd, and I got it straight that Lemoyne had pulled both jobs. But could the dicks hang anything on him? They could not.

However, there was one thing they could do, and they did it. The Chief was a neat, quiet-spoken Scotchman with a shrewd head on his shoulders, and when he got fed up on Lemoyne's hell-raising he sent out orders to give him the works.

From then on they kept the Sheik on the jump. He'd no sooner pay a fine for speeding than they'd hand him a ticket for parking near a hydrant. He was up in police court about a dozen times. The Sheik was smart where the big stuff was concerned, but he was careless about little things, and when they kept checking him up he'd get sore and try to show 'em where they got off at and—bing—they'd nail him for something else again. They taught him about town by-laws he'd never heard of, and finally they made it so hot for him he had to pull out.

BY this time Irene knew what sort of a guy she had married. He still had the flappers chasing him, and he wasn't the boy to shoo 'em away, either. And when he was drinking he used to beat her up. I remember one night I met her walking up and down a dark street, and when I stopped to talk I saw she had a black eye.

"How did it happen, Irene?" I asked.

"I bumped into a door." And she laughed when she told the lie.

"I've been staying in the house until it gets better, but I thought I'd go out for a walk to-night to get some fresh air. If people saw it, they'd think Sheik did it. But I bumped into a door, honest."

She walked away in a hurry, for fear I'd ask any more questions. The poor kid! Having to sneak out at eleven o'clock at night and stick to the back streets for a breath of air. All because of that rat.

But she stuck to him. I guess a woman hates to admit when she's made a mistake—a man does, too, for that matter. And perhaps she was still crazy about him. When Lemoyne had to pull out, she went with him.

Stories drifted back about him. One of the dicks told me he had been taken in a round-up of a hold-up gang in Toronto, but they had to let him go, for he had an air-tight alibi. Still smart, see? There was a big bank robbery pulled off a little while after that, and I heard they figured he was in on it, but there was nothing definite. Later I was told he had gone to Europe, so he must have been cleaning up heavy dough somewhere.

I went to work in Ottawa, and one day I picked up a Cleveland paper and read about a raid on a poolroom. The dicks had been tipped off that there was a mob in town for a job, and they knocked the gang off. Sheik Lemoyne's name was right up in front, and they were holding him on suspicion, but next day he walked out free. Two of the mob were wanted in New York, and one of the others got a short term for packing a gat, but the Sheik and the rest were let loose.

It was always that way. He was either too smart or too lucky to get nabbed for anything big.

"It's bound to come some day," I said to myself. "That egg is born to be hanged, and when it comes it'll come fast and heavy."

I WAS reading copy on a Hartford paper for a while, and one day I met the Sheik on the street. He knew me right away.

"Hello, there," he said. "When did you blow into town?"

I told him I'd been working there for about a month. "How's tricks?" I asked him.

"Sittin' on top of the world."

"Keeping out of trouble?"

"I've never seen the inside of a pen yet."

"They'll get you some day, Sheik," I told him.

He grinned, showing those white even teeth, and flipped the ash from his cigaret in that quick, careless way of his.

"Not me," he said. "I'm too smart. Remember the old days? I was only a small-town guy then, and I've learned plenty since, but there ain't much difference between the small-town bulls and the big-town ones. If a guy watches his step and uses his head, he can beat the game. I'm too smart."

"Lots of other guys have thought that."

"Yeah, but they only thought so," he cracked.

"How's the wife?" I asked him.

He sort of frowned. "Oh, her. She's in Montreal."

"Left you?"

He laughed, careless-like. "Her—leave me? Say, I couldn't shake that broad if I dug for China. She's too dumb to get sore. Stands for anything. No matter what I do, she's always waitin' for me. I got fed up with her a while ago, and I'm livin' with a blonde I picked up in Albany, but she's a gold digger, so I think I'll ditch her some of these days and go back to Irene."

"Does she know about the blonde?"

He shrugged and tilted his hat. "Oh, I guess so. I don't care whether she does or not. She'll take me back and be glad to have me. Honest, ain't women funny? I took a trip to Europe last spring with a dame I picked up in the Big Town, and blew about ten thousand berries in two months. Irene heard about it. Did she say anything? Not a word. When a woman is nuts about you she don't dare say anything. Treat 'em rough. That's my motto. Makes 'em like you all the more."

WHAT do you know about that? I figured he must be right—that Irene was dumb. Imagine any woman standing for that kind of a guy. But some fellows can get away with it.

"You're either mighty good or else just plain lucky," I said to him. "I'd have figured you would have been serving a nice little ten-stretch by now. Don't tell me there isn't one coming to you."

"Oh, I guess I should be, by rights," he came back, as cool as you please, "but they've got to hang something on me first. I'll admit I've been lucky, but I use my head, too. Not that I haven't had some narrow squeaks," he admitted.

"Some of these days——" I said.

"They've never hooked me yet, and I'm learning more every day," he bragged as he turned away.

"Well, be good."

"Not me," he said, and flipped his cigaret butt into the air.

"See you in jail."

"Not me," he said again, and walked away. I watched him go, neat and snappy, swinging along the street as pert as a sparrow and as good-looking as an actor. Knowing what a cold, unscrupulous little devil he really was, knowing how he treated Irene, I still couldn't help but admire him for the front he put up.

Well, I finally landed back in Canada and settled down in Montreal, where a man can drink a quiet glass of beer without feeling like a criminal. I hooked onto a good job covering the waterfront, and I was here when they tripped up Sheik Lemoyne at last. For he came back to Irene, as he always did. How did they trip him up? You must have been living out in the sticks. Oh, I see. Well, it happened this way:

There was a man named Rothstein, who had an office in a building down near the waterfront on one of those side streets that aren't any too safe after dark. There were no gilt letters on Rothstein's door to explain his business, but he went down in the city records as an importer. And, to a certain extent, he was. Some of his business was legitimate; most of it wasn't.

As a matter of fact, although Rothstein had a shabby office in a shabby building, and although customs department records showed that his business was just about enough to give him a fair living, he was playing a big game. Dope smuggling was his racket, at the receiving end, and he was working hand in glove with some crooked ships' officers who got the stuff through to him. He made big dough, and he had been getting away with it for a long time.

One night the flattie on the beat heard a shot from this building. He had noticed a light in Rothstein's window a while before, but this was nothing unusual, for the importer often worked late at night. But when the cop heard this shot he figured it would be a good idea to investigate, so he ran down the street, opened the door, and rushed into the lobby.

Right at the foot of the stairs he could see some one bending over a body on the floor. He switched on his flashlight and recognized Rothstein. The man on the floor was dead. He had been shot through the heart at close range.

Rothstein began to babble that he had heard the shot and that he had just run downstairs to find what it was all about. He was all shaken up and the cop got suspicious, especially when Rothstein began repeating his story over and over again. He had been working late in his office when he heard the shot, and he had run down and found the body at the foot of the stairs. The cop told him to save it for the captain.

AFTER a while the dicks arrived on the scene and took charge of things. They went into Rothstein's office, and there, right in plain view on the desk, was a little satchel stuffed with contraband drugs. Then, when they went through the murdered man's pockets, they found papers that identified him as first mate of a freighter that had docked in Montreal just that day.

That was enough for them. They took Rothstein down to headquarters and put him through it. He was scared green, and although he still insisted that he hadn't had anything to do with the killing, he coughed up and told what he knew about the dope.

The mate, he said, had brought the stuff up to him from the ship just a few minutes before the shooting. That was Rothstein's system. He would wait in his office late at night and get the stuff direct. He paid cash, and he had given the sailor ten thousand dollars, part of it representing payment for the next consignment, the rest of it being the mate's share for the dope he had just delivered. He said he handed over the money and

that the mate left the office. He heard him go down the stairs, two flights, and the next thing he heard was the shot. He run down, found the sailor dead on the floor, and just then the cop came in.

Well, the flatfoot said he had been in full view of the building when he heard the shot, and that no one had gone out the front door. They looked the place over and found that the back door was locked and barred from the inside. If some one had stuck up the mate and drilled him, how had he made his getaway? There was one back window, but it was barred. There were offices to the right and left of the lower hall, but the doors were locked.

IT BEGAN to look bad for Rothstein. The dicks figured that probably he had held out on the cash and that the mate had threatened to squeal on him if he didn't come across. They had argued their way down the stairs and finally Rothstein had shot him before he could get outside. True, they couldn't find the gun, but he might have got rid of it.

At any rate, they held the importer on a murder charge, and it looked like curtains for him.

But where was the money? Had there been any money in the first place? Rothstein swore he had given the mate ten thousand dollars in hundred-dollar bills, half Bank of Commerce and half Bank of Montreal, for he had drawn the cash that day from his account in each bank.

The dicks checked up and found this was true. But where was the dough?

The dicks thought Rothstein had told them about it because he knew they would find out, anyway. They began to figure that he might have really paid the mate and then shot him to get the money back.

They couldn't see the hold-up angle at all. The locked doors and the barred window disposed of that.

THREE days later they left headquarters in a hurry and headed for Lemoyne's apartment up on Sherbrooke Street. They walked right in on him and began to search the place.

The Sheik carried it off fine, laughed at them, told them to look around. They looked. In a compartment beneath the bottom drawer they found ten thousand dollars in hundred-dollar bills of the Bank of Commerce and the Bank of Montreal. They found his gat under a chesterfield cushion, and then they took him into the kitchen and asked questions.

They asked him where he was the night the sailor had been killed.

"Don't tell me you're trying to hook me up with *that,*" laughed the Sheik. "That's one night I can explain where I was."

"Where?"

"Playing poker," he spoke up, prompt. "I was playing poker in a room up over Engel's poolroom on St. Lawrence from nine o'clock until after midnight."

The shooting took place at eleven.

They took him back into the living-room, where one of the dicks had been talking to the Sheik's wife.

"What does she say?" asked the sergeant.

"Aw, she sticks up for him," growled the dick. "She says he didn't leave this apartment all evening."

So! They tell me Lemoyne's face was a picture. His wife had done the best she could, of course, but he hadn't figured on her trying to help him out that far.

Was he grateful? He was not! He cursed her to a fare-thee-well and raved that she was lying. But they took him away. After a while one of the dicks came back and looked over the Sheik's old clothes until he found a dark suit that had a chunk ripped out of the knee. They had figured that if Lemoyne stuck up the sailor, he must have had wind of the dope deal and made plenty of preparations for the job. He had used a skeleton key to open the door of one of the offices at the side of the hall. Then after he bumped off the mate he had beat it into the office, locked the door behind him, cleared out the window, and beat it across the back lots to the next street. The yard was cluttered up with scrap iron and old tin and there was a little chunk of cloth on the edge of an old car fender that he'd tripped over.

The cloth matched beautifully.

The Sheik's alibi fell through. He had a couple of his friends to swear he had been playing poker with them that night, but they got all balled up on the witness stand and any one could see that they were lying. Irene wasn't called to the stand at all. I guess Lemoyne's lawyer figured she had done enough damage already, and in any case she would only have contradicted the alibi. The prosecution, of course, couldn't call her, for you can't force a wife to testify against her husband.

Everybody agreed she had done what she could, and that was more than the Sheik deserved.

An expert testified that the bullet they found in the murdered man had been fired from Lemoyne's gat. The bank identified the money by the numbers on the bills. It was an open-and-shut case. Sheik was sentenced to hang.

THE paper sent me up to interview Irene. We had all been running the usual sob stuff about how faithful she had been to him, about how often she had been deserted, how she had always taken him back and forgiven him, how she was sticking with him to the last. It made great reading. Well, I talked to her.

She remembered me, of course. We got to talking about old times back in the home town and I thought she was going to cry. But she was past crying now. She was older, not very pretty any more, and her eyes were as hard and cold as ice.

"He treated you mighty bad, Irene," I said.

She didn't answer for a while. Then she looked up.

"No one will ever know what I've been through since I married him," she told me quietly.

"I can't figure why you've stuck to him the way you have. 'Most any woman would have left him long ago. You must be pretty crazy about him, Irene."

She laughed then; but it was a short, dry little laugh.

"Yes, I was crazy," she said. "I was crazy when I married him."

"Well," I remarked, "you won't have to put up with him any more."

Her eyes had a funny look in 'em.

"Hanging is too good for him!" she snapped.

I looked up, kind of surprised, see? She had stuck by him so well that this didn't sound quite natural.

"How come?"

"I guess it was mostly my own fault," said Irene. "I wouldn't listen to any one when I was in love with him. You weren't the only person who warned me. I wish I had listened, but when you're in love—oh, I was a little fool, all right! And I thought he cared for me so much that he would settle

down and go straight. Most women are conceited that way. You know how straight he went. He was just a crook and a rum-runner. For a long time I wouldn't let myself believe it, but finally I had to. Then, when I couldn't kid myself along any more and when he used to beat me up, I was always going to leave him. But you know how it was. I was in my own home town, and I wouldn't admit my mistake. When he left I went with him, and I was glad to get away where people wouldn't know me."

"But you've stuck with him ever since. It's a wonder to me you didn't turn him up."

"I thought of that," she admitted. "Usually after he'd left me for some other woman and then come back to me, expecting me to forgive him. But, you see, he never told me very much about the jobs he pulled. Sheik worked alone, mostly, and he didn't trust any one, not even me. I used to lie awake at night hoping he'd make a break and that I'd have a chance to pay him back for all the misery he'd made me suffer. I guess he'd have been awfully astonished if he could have known how much I hated him and how I'd have turned him up in a second if I'd had the chance."

I began to see through it then. "You don't mean to tell me——" I began.

"LET me talk," she said. "The night the sailor was killed Sheik oiled up his gun and went out in his car at about nine o'clock without saying where he was going. I knew he was up to something because he'd been running short of money in the past few weeks. Around midnight he came back. I was in bed, and he thought I was asleep, but I saw him take a big bundle of bills out of his pockets, and hide them under the false bottom to the bureau.

"Next day I read in the papers about the murder, and I knew Sheik had done it. He got a telephone call that afternoon from a woman he had been running around with, and that night he went out and didn't come back for a day and a half. All that time I just sat in the apartment and figured things out. I read that they were charging Rothstein with the murder, so I sat down and wrote a note to the detective bureau. I disguised my writing and didn't sign my name, but I told them Sheik was the man they wanted and that the money was hidden in the apartment. After he came back, I mailed the note. He doesn't know yet that I gave the police the tip. He'll never know."

Her voice was like the tinkle of ice.

"When they arrested him," she went on, "I knew he'd try to have an alibi, and I knew he'd never think I would say he had been at home all that evening. He thought I did it because I was trying to help him. But I said that because I knew it would get him in all the deeper. I still go to see him at the jail. He thinks I'm still the fool he always thought I was. Let him think so."

There's the inside story, and, being a newspaperman, I ought to have given it to my paper, but—oh, well, she knew I wouldn't double-cross her.

But when I think of her going through all that she went through, and just waiting and waiting for the big chance, and Sheik Lemoyne thinking all the time that she was nuts about him and too dumb to get sore at the raw deal he was giving her, it gives me the creeps. Women are funny, huh?

The Weaver Who Would Not Die

By ROBERT W. SNEDDON

IT WAS this legend, no doubt, which suggested to Stevenson one of his best known short stories.

In a Devonshire village lived a wealthy weaver named Knowles, who was famed for his skill in weaving and also in making the best of a bargain. But in due course he died and was buried.

On the day after the funeral, hearing a strange noise, Knowles' son ran upstairs to his father's workroom, where, to his alarm, he saw the dead man working busily at his loom, as he had done every day in life. In terror the young man fled from the house and ran with his story to the parson.

The parson at first scoffed at the tale, but at last accompanied the youth to the house. As soon as they had entered the house, the parson's doubts vanished. Sure enough, from upstairs came the familiar sound of the loom at work. The parson went to the foot of the stairs and shouted up: "Knowles! Come down. This is no place for thee."

"In a minute, parson," came the answer. "Just wait till I've worked out this shuttle."

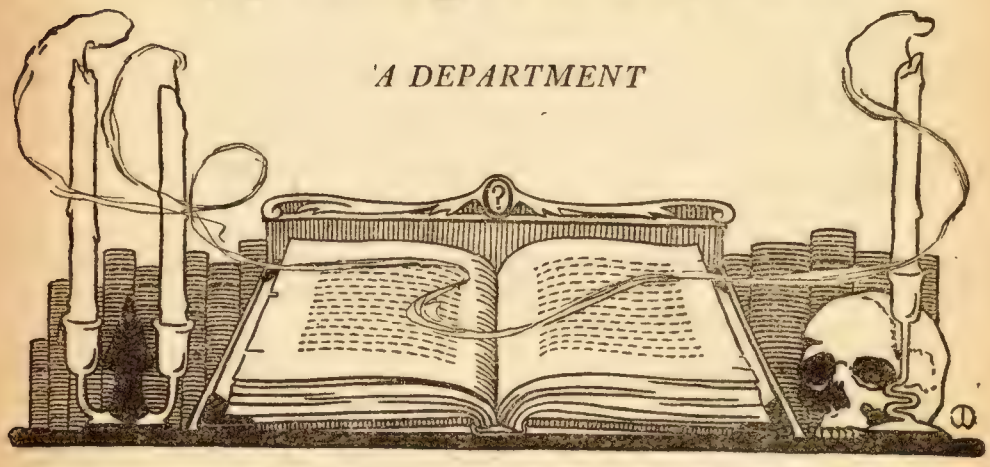
"No," said the parson. "Come down at once. Thou hast worked long enough on this earth."

So the wraith of Knowles came down and the parson led it outside the house. The parson cast on its face some earth he had secured from the churchyard, and at once the weaver turned to a black hound.

"Knowles," said the parson, "this shows me plainly that in life thou tookest more heed of wordly gain than immortality, and thou didst bargain with the powers of evil. There is but one hope of rest for thee. Follow me to the nearby waterfall. Here is a walnut shell. When thou shalt have dipped out the pool with the shell, thou shalt find peace, but not before. Go work out thy salvation."

The Most Mysterious Happening of My Life

A DEPARTMENT



Each month MYSTERY STORIES will print letters of five hundred words or less, telling of the strange experiences of our readers.

These experiences need not be of the occult type, but they must have a strong element of mystery, and their truthfulness must be vouched for by the authors.

For each letter published we shall send the writer five dollars.

Two "Spirit" Notifications

By JOE BYRON TOTTEN

I HAVE been for quite a few years a member of the theatrical profession. Some years ago I was the light comedian of a permanent stock company in a New Jersey city. The leading woman, leading man, ingénue and I were close friends and passed a happy season together. When the company closed, I spent my vacation with my folks, at the shore.

One night I retired early, and was awakened at three o'clock in the morning, with the strangest feeling —as if some one were in my room. Suddenly, out of the darkness, appeared the figure of my little friend, the ingénue. She was clothed in white. She gazed at me for only a moment, and then, as if satisfied that I had awakened, backed toward the window and faded out. I called to my mother, who was in the next room; and when she came in to me, I told her of the apparition. My mother said I had had a nightmare,

but I knew that I had been awakened by an eery feeling and had not been asleep when I saw the ingénue by my bedside.

The incident impressed me so strongly that the next morning I got in touch with the city in which we had played together and found that the leading man had met his death by accident at three o'clock that morning. It was a shock to me, naturally, the passing of one of my friends, who seemed to be in perfect health, but I could not see the connection between that and the fact that our mutual friend, the ingénue, had awakened me. At least, it was peculiar, her appearing at my bedside, at the precise time that my friend met his death.

The following season the ingénue returned to the stock company in Jersey, while I secured an engagement with another stock company at Montreal. One afternoon, during a late rehearsal, I was seated in a box of the theatre, alone, waiting for my next scene. The auditorium of the theatre was dark, as it generally is during rehearsals. I was going over my lines, when I again felt that same eery feeling that I had felt the night of the apparition of the ingénue. Turning my head, I was startled to behold the leading man, dead many months, standing beside me. I turned my head away quickly, but he appeared on the other side of me. I gazed straight ahead, and he appeared in front of me. I was frightened and hurriedly left the box for the stage, where there were people and light. I did not tell any of the members of the company what I had seen, for fear of ridicule.

When the rehearsal was over, I wired to the stock company in Jersey, asking if anything had happened. For the appearance of my dead friend brought vividly to my mind the apparition of the ingénue during the past summer, and somehow I felt there was a connection. If she had tried to notify me of his passing on, maybe he was trying to give a message from her.

That night at the theatre I received a telegram from the leading woman of the stock company in Jersey, stating that the little ingénue had passed away that afternoon. I have never delved in psychic phenomena, I am not a spiritualist, nor have I ever been to a séance.

But I do know that two friends of mine notified me of each other's death. That was many years ago. I have never felt that same eery feeling again, nor have I ever been visited since.

Indian Music

By ALICE HARRIS

MY HUSBAND is a musician, and at the time of this occurrence he was working on some Indian music. Indian music, as most people know, has very distinct characteristics—its own scale, a particular descending interval, which gives it a plaintive, unmistakable coloring.

We were living in our small house on a mountain-side. Two farms had been won by early settlers out of the wilderness, but only ours was still occupied—the other had been recaptured by the wild. So my husband was able to work late into the night, as there was no human habitation nearer than a mile away, and

I loved to listen to the music—broken and reiterated phrase by phrase, as music is when the composer is feeling for the perfect form. I never found it anything but soothing.

One night after I had gone to bed I lay listening while he worked in the adjoining room. Suddenly a curious awareness that I was not alone stole over me, and I opened my eyes to see an Indian also intently listening to the music, standing by the door.

He was evidently a Mohawk Indian—bare from waist up, with a feather head-dress. I felt no fear whatever. I knew there was no menace to me or to my husband in the presence of this powerful savage, so far from us as it seemed in nearly every way. It was as though we were drawn close together under the spell of the music of his race. I watched him quietly for several minutes, and then the apparition vanished.

Of course that part of the country was in the old days peopled by the Mohawk tribe. Such roads as there were through the woods and over the mountains, the old men living around there had told us, followed the trails made first by Indians going single file.

I feel sure that the spirit of this long-dead Mohawk had come back over the old trails, called by the music that held the spirit of his race.

Were You Born with a Caul?

By HARRY F. ALVERS

THE word "caul" seems originally to have been the same as "cowl," a cap or hood, and refers to the membrane sometimes found covering an infant's head and face at birth. According to old superstition, the child born thus is favored by fortune and sometimes endowed with unusual power. Fortune-tellers have often advertised themselves as "born with a caul." It was related that Diadumenus, whose lucky career finally culminated in his being chosen head of the Roman empire, was born thus.

The superstition was prevalent in the early days of the Christian Church, and St. Chrysostom preached against it in several homilies. Some have believed that the idea came from the Orient, but others connect it with the custom prevalent in western Europe of burying kings and other prominent persons in monk's cowls, which were supposed to act as amulets or protection against Satan and witches.

The French always believed strongly in the luck of a person born with a caul; if he entered the law, it was expected that he would eventually wear the sergeant's and the judge's caps. Lawyers often bought cauls from midwives, to make them eloquent.

In fact, the popular belief in many countries was that one could buy luck by buying a caul. One authority said that a person who bought a caul could always tell the state of health of the person who had been born with it: if he were alive and well, it was firm and crisp; if he were sick or dead, it was relaxed and flaccid.

The caul was thought medicinal in most diseases, but its greatest value was as an infallible preservative against drowning. As such, it used frequently to be advertised in English newspapers, and to be bought by persons about to go on sea voyages.

The Mystery Club

A DEPARTMENT

If you've ever had a desire to write mystery stories—and there are few of use who haven't—this is the department for you.

Every month Everard Jason, the Mystery Man, presents the synopsis of an original mystery story — but he doesn't give the solution of the mystery involved. That is left to you.

Here's a chance to try out your ingenuity and your plot-making ability.

And if you send in one of the three answers that, in the opinion of the editors, are the best, you'll get as a prize one of the splendid new mystery books listed elsewhere in this department.

EVERARD JASON sent us this Problem by telegraph, but with more than usual eccentricity he delivered the telegram himself.

"My department," he complained, "is being crushed by the excellence of the rest of your magazine."

"How so?" we asked, not knowing whether to appear complimented or apologetic.

"You publish so many good mystery stories in each issue, a lot of your readers care nothing about the mystery novels I offer them for solutions to the problems. Do they think," he rushed on before we could blush, "that I am inventing these mysteries and giving prize books—the best of the season—for the fun of it? Do they think this is a club or a carnival? Do they think as head of the Mystery Club I do not know great mystery novels when I see them—that I select any but the most skilfully written and thrilling as prizes? In fact," he cried, "do they think?"

"That," we said sharply, "is proved by the answers you have been receiving to your problems. The prizes are attractive, the readers are interested. So it's all up to you and your Problems. Let's see this new one."

With a snort he handed us our telegram, and here it is:

PROBLEM NUMBER SIX

THE STUDIO MYSTERY

Reginald Lamont, noted sculptor, is found slain in his studio. It appears that Lamont has been murdered, though no motive for the crime is uncovered by the police.

When found, Lamont lay in the center of his spacious studio, the back of his skull crushed in by one terrific blow from a sculptor's mallet—his own—which was found lying not far away. But plaster was discovered upon the mallet—and not blood, as might have been expected.

Lamont had been at work upon his statue of Juno, which was nearly completed and ready for delivery to the civic society which had commissioned him to execute it for a certain famous park. This statue of the stately Greek goddess disclosed a curious clue in connection with the crime. Its face had been terribly battered by the same blunt instrument that had killed its creator.

In one corner of the studio lay a smaller statue in fragments—a plaster cast utterly destroyed. The police, attaching importance to this vandalism, pieced the small statue together with sufficient skill and success to disclose a charming dryad, or dancing nymph, which Lamont had evidently worked upon and finished recently.

There are no important suspects in the case. Lamont never permitted casual visitors to come to his studio when he was working. But any of his models had access there, and one of them must have been his slayer. But with what motive? Lamont was a methodical worker and of excellent repute. He seemed happily married. His wife was a former model, a woman of superb and commanding figure, who occasionally posed for her husband after their marriage. Of late, though, she had seldom done so, for she had been painfully cut and gravely scarred in a motor accident.

What is your theory concerning the murder of Reginald Lamont?

There's a real mystery for you to solve. Get out the magnifying glasses and study the clues which have been given you, and write us. Solutions should be sent to The Mystery Club, care of MYSTERY STORIES, 55 West 42d Street, New York, N. Y., and should arrive not later than March 5, 1928. No manuscripts can be returned.

The three answers that in the judgment of the editors are the best will be published in the May issue. The answers do not need to be similar to that of Everard Jason. To each of the writers of these three answers the publishers of this magazine will send a book selected from the list of new publications given below:

THE OCTOPUS OF PARIS, by Gaston Leroux *(The Macaulay Co.)*
THE WHISPERING CHORUS, by Perley Poore Sheehan *(G. H. Watt).*
THE QUEEN'S GATE MYSTERY, by Herbert Adams *(J. B. Lippincott Co.).*
THE WITNESS AT THE WINDOW, by Charles Barry *(E. P. Dutton & Co.).*
THE DEVIL OF PEI-LING, by Herbert Asbury *(Macy-Massius).*
VENETIAN KEY, by Allen Upward *(J. B. Lippincott Co.).*
VIVANTI, by Sidney Horler *(George H. Doran Co.).*
THE "CANARY" MURDER CASE, by S. S. Van Dine *(Charles Scribner's Sons.)*
SINISTER HOUSE, by Charles G. Booth *(William Morrow & Co., Inc.).*
BEADS OF SILENCE, by Lillian Bamburg *(E. P. Dutton & Co.).*
THE MAN IN THE SAND HILLS, by Anthony Marsden *(A. & C. Boni, Inc.).*
THE TECHNIQUE OF THE MYSTERY STORY, by Carolyn Wells *(The Home Correspondence School).*

Clever folk, these MYSTERY STORIES readers. They can't be stumped by anything—even a cunning secret service agent. Below we give the three solutions which in our opinion rank highest in seeing through THE CLEVER RUSE OF A SECRET AGENT, which appeared in the January issue. The first solution is that of Everard Jason. The three others follow.

SOLUTION by EVERARD JASON

Arriving in Paris, the British secret agent reported at once to the Committee of Public Safety. He told the members that in journeying from Calais, accompanied by a chance acquaintance of the road, he had been set upon by rogues, and had barely managed to escape. But not so his traveling companion. That unfortunate fellow had been slain.

This would, he knew, be checked up, and the body of the French agent would be found and on it the false identification papers which had been his own in setting forth from London. So far, so good.

And then his major ruse: He declared that during the struggle he had received a

blow on the head that had nearly shattered his skull, dulling his wits and greatly impairing his memory. Even the report he had come from the north to make in person would not be clear and concise till his condition had improved.

Anxious to help him toward a cure, those in Paris to whom he reported undertook to remind him of all the little personal matters he could not recall. They told him all about himself, over and over again, until presently his "memory" had improved, and he knew those things which he had to know if he wished successfully to continue his bold impersonation.

Solution by Arthur Back

607 Florence St., Worcester, Mass.

The agent, when within a short distance of Paris, dismounted and with his knife gave his clothes several rents and tears to give himself the appearance of having had a fight. Next he smeared his face, hands, and clothes with dirt. His next move was to make a gash in his forehead. This he bound up with a strip torn from his shirt.

For the rest of the trip to Paris he drove his horse at a fast pace to make it seem as though he had been pursued for some distance.

When he arrived at the gates of Paris he fell from his horse in a pretended swoon. His papers proved his identity, and he was given the best of care. The doctors, when they found that as a result of the blow on the forehead he had lost his memory, brought his friends and relatives to freshen it. Thus he learned about the man he impersonated. He could never hope to tell about Holland, Denmark, or Sweden, but that could be easily attributed to his mental illness. Even meeting friends on the street could be managed without suspicion because of his memory.

Last of all, his slight wound would not hinder his moving around. Thus he could accomplish his mission there with the royalists and aristocrats.

Solution by Stephen S. Maxon

3875 Reservoir Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn.

Rothscar, the secret agent, pushed on and hid in a wood near Paris. He disheveled himself and soiled his clothes. For three days he remained hidden in thickets.

Stumbling into a peasant's cottage, he feigned exhaustion and inability to explain his condition. Examining Rothscar's bags, the peasant found and recognized an official badge, whereupon he called an officer from the highway, who conducted Rothscar directly before the French authorities. They accepted him as the lost spy.

Rothscar pretended to remember falling from his horse and wandering about in the woods. Doctors' exaninations confirmed his statement of having been without food for some time. Friends of the French spy visited Rothscar, and he pretended to have only a vague memory of them and his spy work, but gradually he "remembered" more and more.

As a trusted officer he moved unhampered in Paris, and safely executed his mission for the British.

Solution by Robert Dyamond

16 St. John St., Quebec, Canada

The French official was no doubt known by the average French people (who doesn't know the first men of his country?) and perhaps there would be people at the gates of Paris who would recognize him readily in his new disguise. Since the road came from two main points, it was not long before he heard the trotting of a horse.

Rolling over in the road, he fires a shot and starts to stagger as though in pain. The *voiture* overtakes him. He is immediately recognized as the French official, so he drops to the ground, apparently exhausted.

The driver, naturally, having heard the shot, suspects foul play. Thinking that the official has been shot, he lifts him into the *voiture* and sets out for Paris to take him to a hospital.

At the gates of Paris the agent is not asked any questions and is delayed as little as possible, for, in his dirty state, he looks as if he needs attention.

When he reaches the hospital he is put to bed. While in the *voiture*, he pinched his face and body, so that they show bruises which look real. Any mistakes he makes in the presence of visitors are put down to his nervous condition. Also, he becomes acquainted with the people he is supposed to know, and becomes thoroughly familiar, through listening to these people, with the habits which are supposed to be his.

The government does not press his business until he gets over his bad condition, and by the time he is ready to leave the hospital he knows all he needs to know.

THE solutions sent in by the following readers ranked high in the opinion of the editors:

F. Wayne Reed, Jr., Coatesville, Pa.; Ella Hardy, Ipswich, Mass.; Frank J. Ott. Jr., Brooklyn, N. Y.; Frank M. Wolfe, Mt. Vernon, N. Y.; Loretta Speer, Hoboken, N. J.; Katharine Valletton, Mill Springs, N. C.; Mrs. Melroy Close, Leipsic, O.; Fred Remoser, Newark, N. J.; Don W. Bailey, Monaca, Pa.; George R. Hall, Bronx, N. Y.; Grace M. Norris, M. D., Utica, N. Y.; Sophia Szczerba, Jersey City, N. J.

We Tell Our Readers

N CONVERSING with people in various walks of life, one is impressed with the number who regard the editing of a magazine as a glamorous occupation. Every editorial office has a constant stream of applicants for positions. And in truth there is joy in editing—sometimes. But the editor has many anxious and even agonizing moments. His bed of roses hasn't been entirely dethorned. But when the circulation department—which is usually quite distinct from the editorial department—reports that the circulation of the magazine is going steadily upward, the editor decides that this is a pretty good world, after all. Just at present the editorial staff of MYSTERY STORIES is enjoying that satisfied feeling. But we haven't the slightest intention of resting on our oars. We intend to make this magazine better—always better, so that the circulation will not have any excuse for not increasing. We have some exceptionally fine things lined up for future numbers, but we won't tell you about them now. We prefer to tell you something about the writers who have helped to make this number a banner one.

You probably remember that remarkable novelette in the November issue—THE SHANGHAI BETRAYAL. Raymond Scudder wrote it, and he also is responsible for the novelette in this issue, THE SAMURAI FAN. The scene is laid in Hawaii, a country with which Mr. Scudder is familiar. For a very young man, he has had an astonishing amount of experience in knocking around the world, and he is making very good use of this experience in his fiction. We take a special interest in Mr. Scudder, as his first stories appeared in this magazine.

We have printed several stories by Leslie McFarlane, and, judging by numerous letters that have come in, he is a favorite with our readers. Mr. McFarlane has had varied experience, and for a time was a police reporter, which gave him valuable material for fiction. In THE INSIDE STORY, he gives us a grimly realistic close-up of crooks and their "molls." It isn't a pretty story, but it's one you'll remember.

Lupe Loya, who wrote THE BAD BOY FROM BITTER CREEK, knows the West at first hand. Some writers of Western stories don't—but their work doesn't appear in MYSTERY STORIES.

Carl Clausen modestly describes himself as having no sense of humor—and then proves that he has by giving us a very funny crook story, RUMMY. His work has been appearing in the Saturday Evening Post, Pictorial Review, Red Book, and the other important magazines.

Sylvia Stevenson, who wrote THE RETURN OF SIBELLA, is a student of the psychic sciences. She drove an ambulance during the world war.

A generation ago there were few crimes against children—and certainly not the atrocious ones that seem to be common now. The first serious case of kidnaping on record was that of Charlie Ross. Alvin Harlow gives a most interesting account of this foul deed that aroused the country half a century ago.

Katharine Haviland Taylor brings her serial, LONG SHADOWS, to a conclusion. We have told you about this writer in a previous issue. LONG SHADOWS will appear in book form shortly.

Richard Wilmer Rowan, author of the Von Karl Stories—THE SPY MASTER—has made a study of espionage systems in various countries. In 1917 he wrote anonymously a book relating to spies and secret service activities in "conquered" Belgium. This book, accepted as the work of a Belgian, proved of startling fidelity when the true situation of that land was disclosed after the German invaders were expelled. To this day, it is among the war archives in Brussels as an authentic Belgian memoir.

THEN CHOOSE AVIATION!

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Partial List of Contents

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How to Be Popular
How to Overcome Failure and Adverse Environment
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How to Develop Personality
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How to Double Your Efficiency
VISUALIZATION—How to Make Your Dreams Come True
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How to Use Suggestion for Health, Success and Happiness
The Greatest Law in the Universe, Just Lately Discovered, and How to Use It
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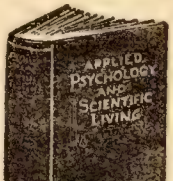

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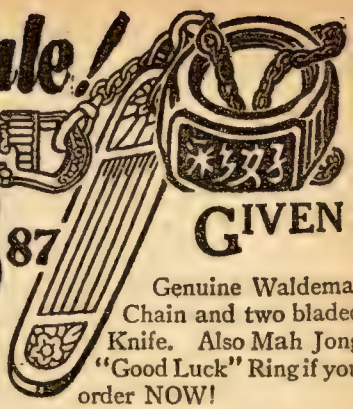

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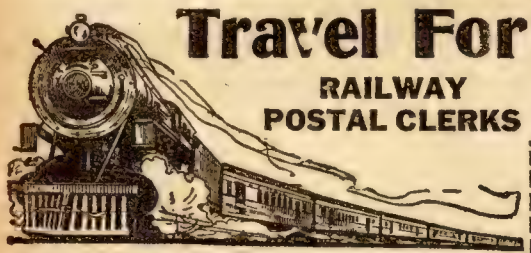

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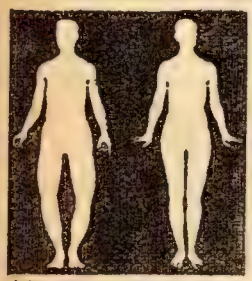

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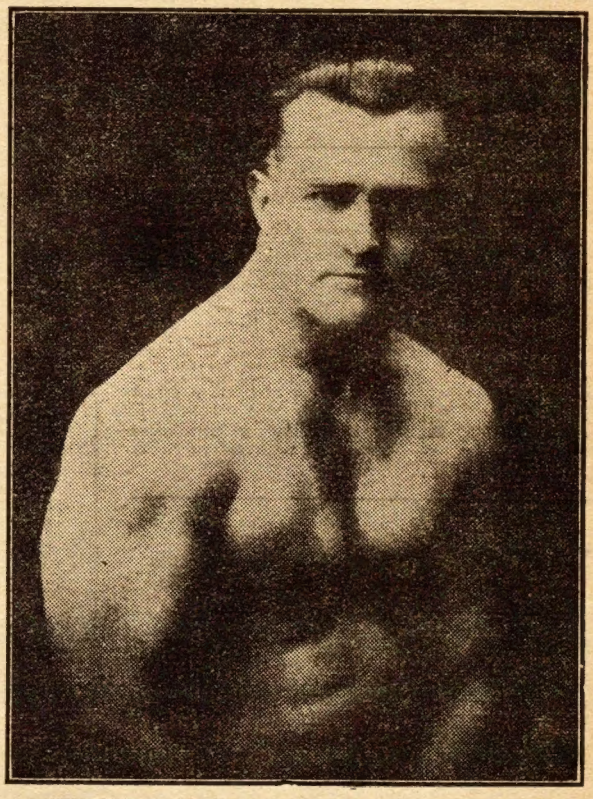
WOULDN'T it be great if we could buy muscles by the bag—take them home and paste them on our shoulders? Then our rich friends with money to buy them sure would be socking us all over the lots.

But they don't come that easy, fellows. If you want muscle you have to work for it. That's the reason why the lazy fellow never can hope to be strong. So if you're lazy and don't want to work—you had better quit right here. This talk was never meant for you.



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"You'll stretch out your big brawny arms and crave for a chance to crush everything before you. You'll just bubble over with vim and animation.

Sounds pretty good, what? You can bet your old ukulele it's good. It's wonderful. And don't forget, fellow—I'm not just promising all this—I guarantee it. Well, let's get busy. I want some action—So do you.

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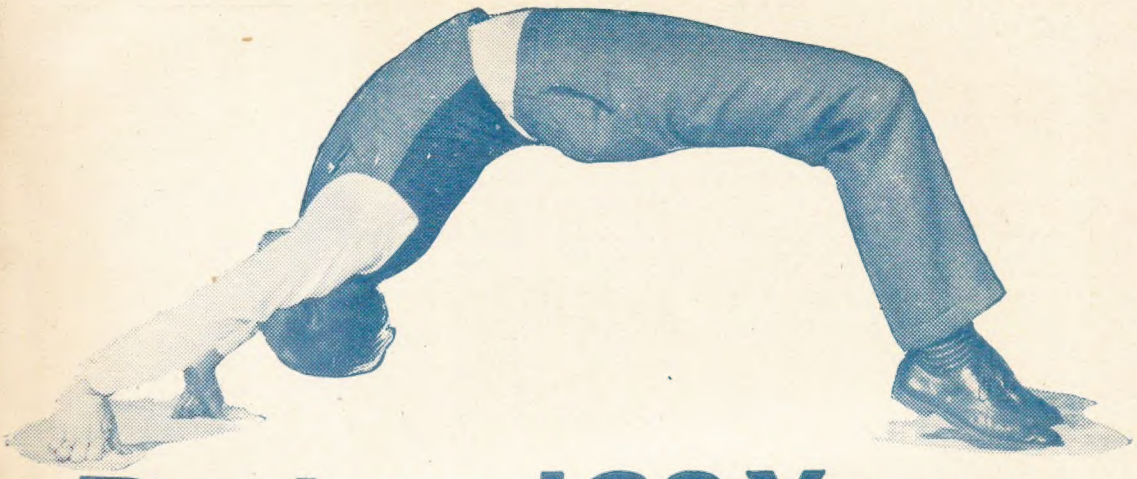

Ruptured 38 Years Is This a Miracle?

A SUDDEN STRAIN AT THE AGE OF TWELVE. . . . THIRTY-EIGHT YEARS OF PAIN AND DISCOMFORT. . . . NOW AT FIFTY RELIEF AT LAST.

"I HAD despaired of ever getting relief from torture, uncomfortable devices, and fear of strangulation. Then came the day that I learned of this remarkable new discovery. It appealed to my common sense, so I sent for it. Almost immediately I felt its wonderful relief. In a few months I was a new man. Today at 50 I enjoy life as a normal man should."

Is this a miracle? No. Thousands of others have also discovered the almost magic power of an amazing new invention which has revolutionized old-fashioned methods of helping hernia. Although only recently announced to the general public, scientific men have been watching with keen interest the tests made within the last eighteen months. The inventor, an American scientist of note, quietly offered it to a limited number of sufferers in every stage of replaceable rupture. The results are of keen interest to medical science.

A New York man who has suffered for 20 years reported it to be the first device he has ever publicly endorsed—a 90-year-old man writes that his hernia has almost disappeared. . . . A Nebraska man says that he has forgotten he is wearing it. . . . Physicians praise it as an entirely new departure. . . . And now it is available to every rupture sufferer in America!

Seals Rupture With a Quarter

Now a queer little device—little larger than a quarter—weighing less than 1-25th of an ounce—reduces rupture by a new method called "sealing," a modern method heretofore impossible with old-fashioned appliances. No longer need hernia sufferers wear awkward steel springs, weighty cushions, unclean leg-straps, and other make-shift devices that were always slipping off the wound.

Magic Dot cannot possibly slip off—for it anchors to the acute point of rupture. More, it allows free blood circulation to tend to knit the tissues over the wound, and heal it much like every other wound is permitted to heal. This exclusive advantage is important, says science. For the old-time "pressing" method with its harsh pressure, common sense warns, prevents free blood circulation and nature's healing process cannot fully operate. Test this fact—press the finger against the skin and note the white spot remaining. The spot is white because blood can't circulate under harsh pressure.

No More Heavy, Unclean Crotch or Leg Straps

This new modern way is like no other appliance in the world. It is an appliance for human beings. It enables the wearer to bend, cough, run, jump or sleep in any position without fear of the appliance slipping down. For Magic Dot is protected by a flesh-soft, air-porous pad which has no hard corners or harsh surface to grind into the flesh and which flexes with every move of the body. It "breathes." A new kind of comfortable method gently supports the pad. So it is no wonder users say they forget they are wearing it! And no wonder it is healing thousands of rupture cases like those quoted here.

So confident are the inventors that Magic Dot will relieve and delight every sufferer—even cases of many years standing—that they are making an amazing "SEE IT FIRST" offer. Send no money. Be under no obligation. Simply get full description and details of this unusual offer. Learn how easy it is to reduce rupture at home in an amazing short time and banish pain and discomfort forever. Use the coupon.

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Yes, send me complete details of the Magic Dot that reduces rupture.

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You who already possess a standard fountain pen will find the Inkograph a most valuable addition to your writing equipment, for it will do everything any fountain pen can do and many very important things which it is impossible to accomplish with any fountain pen at any price.

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Inkograph has proven so satisfactory and has elicited considerable favorable comment. Am enclosing money order for three more. T. J. TROW,
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Joplin, Mo.

The Inkograph fully justifies all claims you make. I own a Waterman but Inkograph is far preferable.
FRANK R. SARGENT,
Oakland, Calif.

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Oh Boy, I am tickled skinny to have the Inkograph. It's a darling. I can now make carbon copies in taking orders and send original in ink to factory instead of a penciled sheet. It surely flows over the paper as if it was grease instead of ink. No trouble at all and a thing I could not do before to trace straight lines very fine and clean. No smear, no muss of any kind. It's just great.
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My Inkograph is the smoothest writing instrument with which I have ever written. That is saying a lot. I am a teacher by profession. I have a $7.00 pen and another that cost more than the Inkograph, but Inkograph is better than either. It is the greatest improvement in writing instruments since the Babylonians recorded their thoughts on clay tablets with a triangular pointed reed.
JOHN R. ATWELL,
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of both pen and pencil, minus the weak points of both, plus improvements not found in either. The lead pencil smudges, the point breaks and its writing soon is obliterated. Most fountain pens skip, scratch, flood, clog, leak, blot, soil hands and clothing. The old stylographic ink pencil dries up, balks, blots, writes heavy, flows unevenly and is never reliable. The Inkograph feeds as fast and uniform on the 20th page as it did on the first.

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Prevents clogging. No complicated mechanism to clean or get out of order. A year's guarantee certificate with full directions accompanies each Inkograph and is your absolute protection.

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Your name and address are sufficient. Pay postman $1.50, plus postage on delivery. When cash accompanies order, Inkograph will be sent postage prepaid. If within ten days the Inkograph does not prove satisfactory return it and we'll refund your money without further correspondence. It is because we are sure the Inkograph will meet your requirements to perfection that makes it possible for us to make you so attractive an offer.

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